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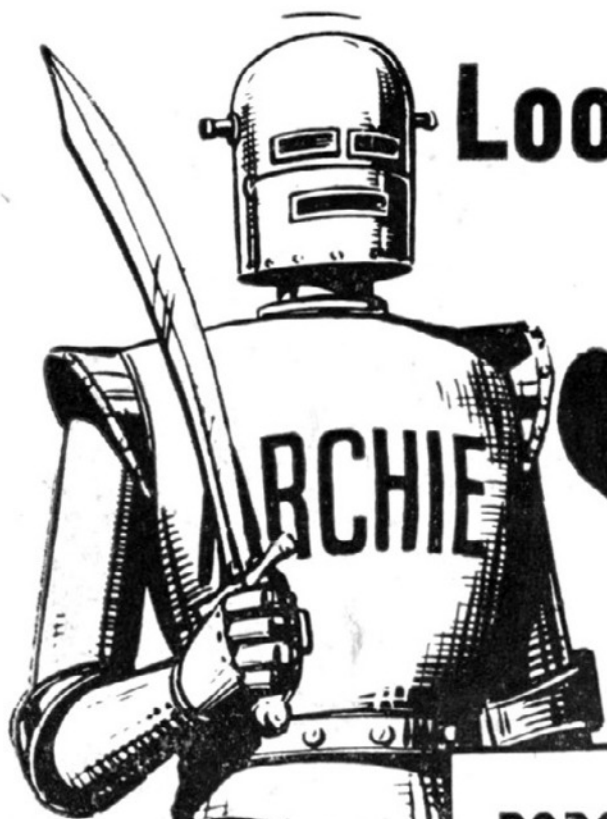
NO 43

1/-

THREE
-TWO
-ONE
-ZERO!



Look who's in LION



ROBOT ARCHIE

The amazing metal man

BILLY THE KID

The fastest gun in the West

PADDY PAYNE

Warrior of the Skies

CAPTAIN CONDOR

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LION

4½^D

FIVE STAR WEEKLY

-THREE.. TWO.. ONE.. ZERO!



IN 1942, WITH LONDON BATTERED BY GERMAN BOMBING BUT STILL DEFIANT, HITLER'S SCIENTISTS DEVELOPED NEW AND MORE DEVILISH WEAPONS TO BRING THE STUBBORN ENGLISH TO THEIR KNEES. ONE OF THESE WAS THE DELAYED-ACTION LAND MINE.

Chapter 1. RESERVED OCCUPATION

METAL CANISTERS EIGHT FEET LONG AND PACKED WITH 1500 LETHAL POUNDS OF HEXANITE EXPLOSIVE, THE MINES WERE DROPPED BY PARACHUTE. ONE OF THESE SINISTER PACKAGES OF DESTRUCTION WAS UNLOADED ON A BRIGHT JULY NIGHT OVER THE THAMES ESTUARY.



LOOK,
JOE,
LOOK!

THE
JERRIES MUST'VE
DROPPED IT! AND
THE GUVNOR'S STILL
IN THE WORKSHOP
WITH MAC!
WE'VE GOT TO
WARN THEM...
QUICK!

SWINGING WITH VICIOUS GENTLENESS IN THE NIGHT WIND, THE LAND MINE DROPPED TOWARDS A SMALL FACTORY ON THE RIVER BANK WEST OF TILBURY. INSIDE THAT FACTORY, TWO MEN WERE WORKING LATE.



IT'S NIGH ON
MIDNIGHT, MISTER
CHALLIS! ARE YOU
THINKING OF
WORKING ALL
NIGHT?

THE
CHAPS WHO USE OUR
ASDIC'S DON'T KNOCK OFF
AT HALF-FIVE, MAC! THEY'RE
OUT THERE FIGHTING THE
U-BOATS RIGHT NOW! IF
THE ADMIRALTY WON'T
LET ME FIGHT WITH
THEM, THE LEAST I CAN
DO IS TO SEE THAT
THEIR EQUIPMENT
DOESN'T LET
THEM DOWN!

BARNEY CHALLIS WAS THIRTY TWO. A BRILLIANT TECHNICIAN, HE HAD BUILT UP A SMALL PRECISION ENGINEERING COMPANY WHICH WAS NOW ENGAGED ON GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS. HE KNEW THIS WAS VITAL WAR WORK, BUT STILL HE HAD A GRIEVANCE...



THREE TIMES CHALLIS HAD VOLUNTEERED FOR THE NAVY: THREE TIMES HE HAD BEEN TURNED DOWN. HE WAS MORE USEFUL WORKING IN HIS FACTORY THAN FIGHTING IN A WARSHIP, THE ADMIRALTY HAD TOLD HIM. BUT NOW FATE WAS SWINGING TOWARDS BARNEY CHALLIS — AT THE END OF A PARACHUTE.



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

THE LAND MINE HIT THE NORTH-LIGHT ROOF OF THE CHALLIS FACTORY AND SMASHED THROUGH INTO THE WORKSHOP. THE MEN FLUNG THEMSELVES TO THE GROUND AS DEBRIS SPRAYED OVER THE BENCHES. AND IN THE SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED...

MAC!

ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT?

THE MINE HAD NOT EXPLODED. CAUTIOUSLY, BARNEY CHALLIS LIFTED HIS HEAD. THE GREAT METAL CANISTER LAY INTACT IN THE DEBRIS ON THE WORKSHOP FLOOR. THE ENGINEER'S EYES GLEAMED.

COME
AWAY, MISTER
CHALLIS! IT MAY
GO UP AT ANY
MINUTE!

JUST
A MINUTE, MAC,
I'M CURIOUS! I'D
LIKE TO SEE A
PIECE OF JERRY
ENGINEERING!

SOMEWHERE INSIDE THAT SULLEN METAL MONSTER, THE DELICATE MECHANISM OF THE FUSE MIGHT EVEN NOW BE TICKING TOWARDS THE HAIR-TRIGGER ACTION WHICH WOULD DETONATE ITS DEADLY LOAD OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE.

I WONDER
WHERE THE FUSE
IS?



FASCINATED BY THE MECHANICAL MYSTERY OF THAT SILENT CANISTER, BARNEY CREPT TOWARDS THE MINE. OUTSIDE THE WORKSHOP, THE CIVIL DEFENCE HAD BEEN ALERTED.

IT'S
LANDED IN THE
WORKSHOP, MATES!
DIRTY GREAT
CIGAR-SHAPED
THING!

CORDON OFF
THE AREA, MEN! IT
SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF
THOSE JERRY LAND
MINES! YOU COME
WITH ME,
TOM!



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

THE WARDEN GAVE SWIFT ORDERS. HE KNEW THE TERRIBLE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF THESE GERMAN LAND MINES. VERY CAUTIOUSLY HE WENT INTO THE DUST-FILLED FACTORY.

WHAT THE DEVIL—
ARE YOU CRAZY,
MAN?

THANK HEAVENS
YOU CAME! PERHAPS
HE'LL LISTEN TO
YOU!



LITTLE WAS KNOWN ABOUT THIS NEW GERMAN WEAPON. SOME PEOPLE THOUGHT THAT EVEN A SMALL VIBRATION NEAR THE MINE WAS ENOUGH TO SET IT OFF—AND HERE WAS A MAN ACTUALLY TOUCHING IT!

YOU'RE
PLAYING WITH
DEATH, MISTER
CHALLIS!

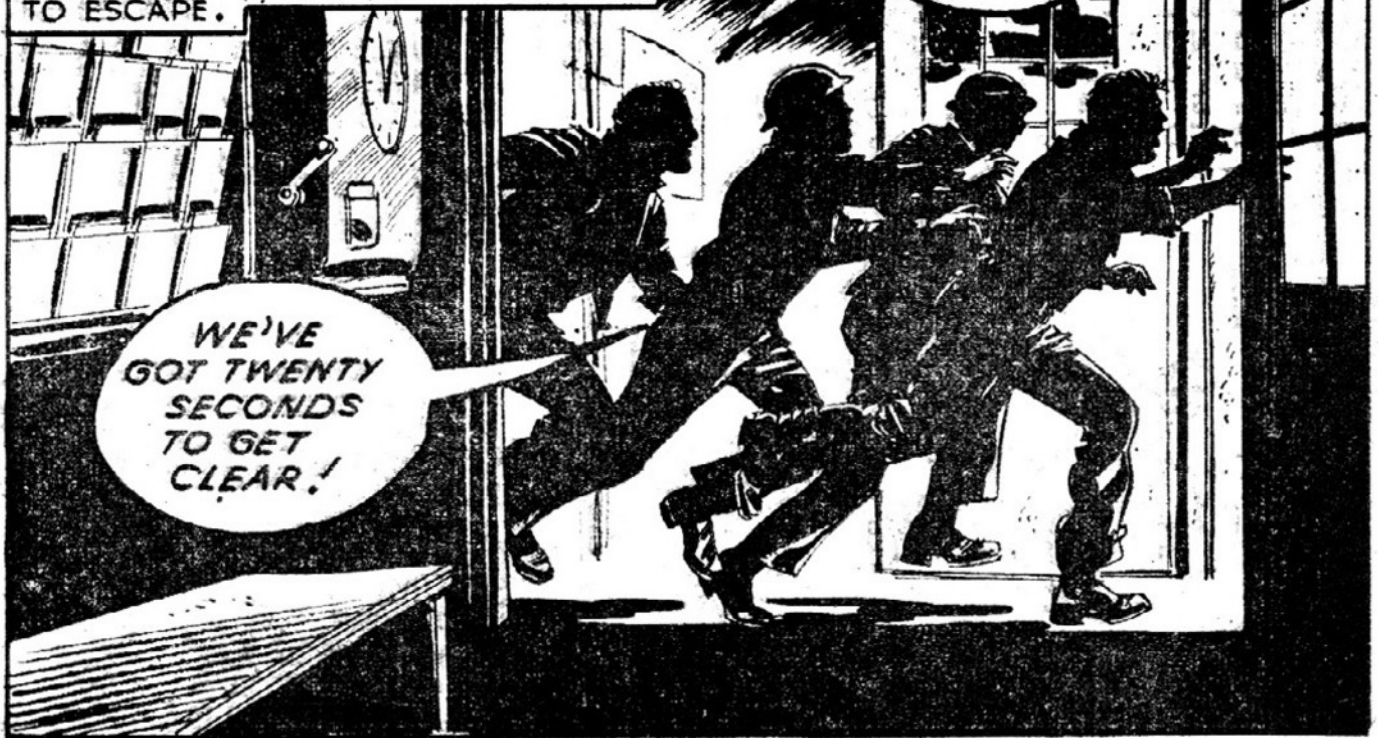
SIR—
THAT THING'S
TICKING!



EVEN AS THE WARDEN SHOUTED AT CHALLIS, HIS ASSISTANT HEARD THE EERIE MOVEMENT OF THE SECRET MECHANISM INSIDE THE METAL CASE. NOW THE FOUR MEN HAD SECONDS TO ESCAPE.

THERE'S A DUG-OUT IN THE YARD! LEAD THE WAY, MAC.

WE'VE GOT TWENTY SECONDS TO GET CLEAR!



FRANTICALLY, THE FOUR MEN BURST INTO THE FACTORY YARD. BEHIND THEM THE SINISTER TICKING INSIDE THE METAL CANISTER GREW LOUDER ... AND LOUDER AS BARNEY CHALLIS REACHED THE CONCRETE SHELTER ...



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

THE EXPLOSION RIPPED OPEN THE FACTORY AND FLUNG IT IN STEEL AND CONCRETE SHREDS OVER A SQUARE MILE OF RAVAGED STREETS. THE UNDERGROUND SHELTER SHUDDERED IN THE BLAST, BUT...

YOU WERE WRONG, OLD CHAP! IT WAS TWELVE SECONDS!

COR! HE'S COUNTING SECONDS WITH DEATH AT HIS ELBOW!



MACHINERY HAD ALWAYS FASCINATED THE BRILLIANT ENGINEER, BUT NOW AS HE CLIMBED OUT INTO THE GLARE OF SCATTERED FIRES, BARNEY CHALLIS BECAME A BITTER, ANGRY MAN...

TWELVE YEARS OF WORK BLOWN TO BITS IN TWELVE SECONDS!



THE LAND MINE WHICH HAD WIPED OUT HIS FACTORY HAD GIVEN CHALLIS BOTH THE MOTIVE AND THE CHANCE TO JOIN THE FIGHTING FORCES.

WELL, THAT'S MY FACTORY GONE — AND MY RESERVED OCCUPATION! I'M GOING TO MAKE THE JERRIES PAY FOR THIS, AND NO BRASS HAT AT THE ADMIRALTY IS GOING TO STOP ME!



Chapter 2. SPECIAL MISSION

EARLY NEXT MORNING, A GRIMLY DETERMINED BARNEY MARCHED INTO THE ADMIRALTY TO SEE HIS FRIEND, COMMANDER CLARKE.

HALLO, BARNEY!
I HEAR YOUR FACTORY GOT
PRANGED LAST NIGHT! THOSE
NEW JERRY LAND MINES
MAKE A DEVILISH
MESS WHEN THEY
GO UP!

THAT'S
WHY I'M HERE,
COMMANDER!

DIRECTORATE
OF NAVAL
RECRUITMENT

THREE TIMES THE COMMANDER HAD BLUNTLY REFUSED TO LET BARNEY CHALLIS JOIN THE FIGHTING NAVY. BUT THIS TIME...

THERE'S NOTHING TO
KEEP ME OUT OF THE
NAVY NOW, COMMANDER!
YOU'VE GOT TO
LET ME
FIGHT!

WE'VE HAD ALL THIS
OUT BEFORE, BARNEY! YOU'RE
A HIGHLY SKILLED ENGINEER!
THERE ARE OTHER WAYS OF
FIGHTING THAN MANNING
A SHIP!

THE BRILLIANT ENGINEER WAS BITTERLY SERIOUS. NOW HE HAD A BRUTAL INJURY TO AVENGE.

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIGHT AS I SEE IT, COMMANDER— WITH A GUN! THE JERRIES HAVE HIT ME WITH HIGH EXPLOSIVE AND THAT'S THE WAY I WANT TO HIT BACK AT THEM! YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE ME THE CHANCE!



THE NAVAL OFFICER REMEMBERED THE SHATTERED FACTORY WHICH HAD BEEN BARNEY CHALLIS' PRIDE. RELUCTANTLY HE MADE HIS DECISION.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE THAT, BARNEY, YOU'D BETTER HAVE IT YOUR OWN WAY! I STILL THINK YOU'LL BE WASTING YOUR TALENT ON A SHIP— AND MAYBE THE ADMIRALTY WILL THINK THE SAME WHEN THEY'VE GOT YOU INTO UNIFORM!

I'LL TAKE MY CHANCE ON THAT, COMMANDER!



TWO MONTHS LATER, IN SEPTEMBER 1942, BARNEY CHALLIS REPORTED AT A NAVAL RECRUITING CENTRE IN THE SOUTH.

OCCUPATION?

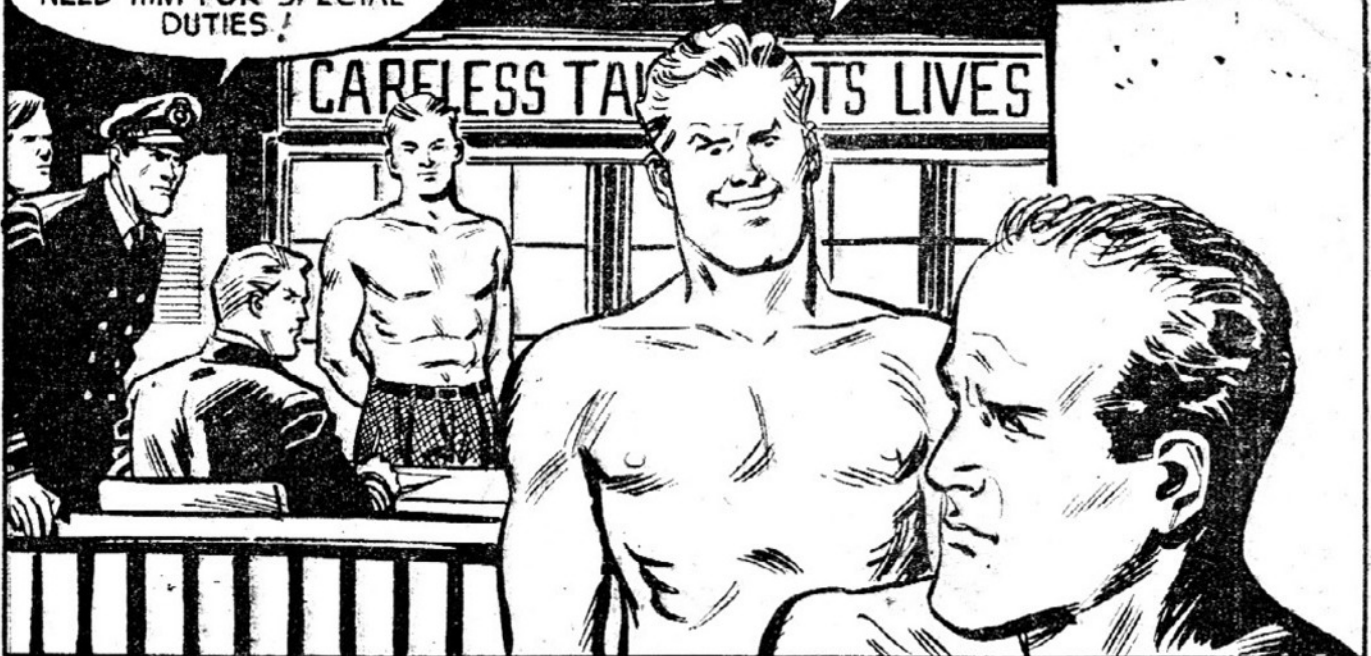
ER... WELL, SIR... ENGINEER!



BUT ALTHOUGH HE HAD WON HIS WAY INTO THE ROYAL NAVY, THE NAVAL SUB-LIEUTENANT SAID NOTHING TO BARNEY, BUT THE ENGINEER'S STRUGGLE TO FIGHT WAS NOT YET OVER...

THAT MAN CHALLIS—
MAKE A NOTE THAT HE'S
AN ENGINEER! WE MAY
NEED HIM FOR SPECIAL
DUTIES!

HEAR THAT, CHALLIS? NICE CUSHY
NUMBER REPAIRING THE ADMIRAL'S LAUNCH
FOR THE REST OF THE WAR! SOME CHAPS
HAVE ALL THE LUCK!



THE OFFICER'S REMARK WARNED BARNEY THAT HIS SKILL AS AN ENGINEER MIGHT STILL BAR HIM FROM THE SEA. HIS SCOWLING DETERMINATION AMUSED FELLOW-RECRUIT CHRIS ARMSTRONG, WHO HAD ALSO BEEN SELECTED TO TRAIN AS AN OFFICER AT H.M.S. KING ALFRED.

I JOINED THIS NAVY TO FIGHT,
AND IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN AN
ADMIRAL TO STOP
ME!



IT'S
YOUR LIFE, OLD
CHAP! BUT IF
I WERE YOU I'D
WAIT TILL WE'VE
GOT OUR OFFICER'S
RINGS AT K.A.
BEFORE YOU START
PICKING FIGHTS
WITH BRASS
HATS!

AFTER THEIR INITIAL TRAINING AT SEA, BARNEY AND CHRIS WENT TO THE OFFICER'S TRAINING ESTABLISHMENT AT HOVE. THE COURSE WAS A GRUELLING ONE, BUT THE THIRTY-TWO YEAR OLD ENGINEER KEPT PACE WITH HIS YOUNGER COMPANIONS.



WELL, BARNEY, TWO WEEKS TO POSTING! I WONDER WHAT THE NAVY WILL DO WITH US?

AS LONG AS THEY PUT ME ON A SHIP WITH GUNS I'LL BE HAPPY!

DETERMINATION TO SERVE AS A FIGHTING OFFICER HAD DRIVEN BARNEY THROUGH THE GRUELLING PHYSICAL TEST. BUT THE FASCINATION MACHINERY HAD FOR HIM STILL REMAINED.



ENGINE TROUBLE, SIR? CAN I HAVE A SHOT AT STARTING HER?

YOU CAN TRY, CHALLIS! BUT I RECKON IT'LL NEED A MAGICIAN TO GET THIS BAG OF NAILS WORKING AGAIN!

WITH THE OLD KEEN DELIGHT, BARNEY CHALLIS SET TO WORK ON THE OILY ENTAILS OF LIEUTENANT BARTLETT'S ANCIENT MOTOR CAR.



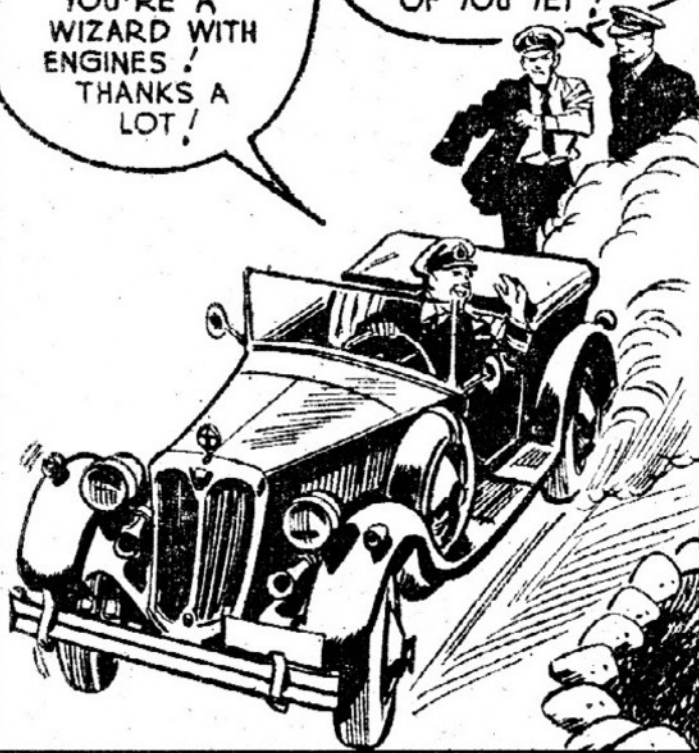
TRY HER NOW, SIR!

BLOW ME DOWN, SHE'S STARTED FIRST TIME!

THE HEALTHY ROAR OF THE ENGINE HE HAD REPAIRED BROUGHT A TRIUMPHANT SMILE TO BARNEY'S FACE. BUT THE SMILE SOON FADED...

YOU'LL BE WASTED ON THE BRIDGE OF A SHIP, CHALLIS! YOU'RE A WIZARD WITH ENGINES! THANKS A LOT!

WATCH IT, BARNEY OLD CHAP! THEY'LL MAKE A BARRACK STANCHION OF YOU YET!



UNWITTINGLY, BARNEY HAD GIVEN THE LIEUTENANT PROOF OF HIS BRILLIANT ENGINEERING SKILL. AND FOR DAYS AFTERWARDS THE OFFICER WOULD NOT LET HIM FORGET IT.

BE HONEST, BARNEY, YOU COULDN'T KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THAT MESSY OLD BIT OF MACHINERY THE OTHER DAY, COULD YOU?

MAYBE I COULDN'T! BUT THAT'S NO EXCUSE FOR THE LIEUTENANT TO KEEP PESTERING ME ABOUT SPECIAL DUTIES!



LIEUTENANT BARTLETT WANTED BARNEY TO REQUEST A TRANSFER TO SPECIAL DUTIES, WHERE HIS SKILL AS AN ENGINEER COULD BE UTILISED BY THE NAVY. TWO DAYS AFTER THE INCIDENT WITH THE CAR...

CHANGED YOUR MIND YET, CHALLIS?

NO, SIR! AND I DON'T INTEND TO!



IT LOOKED AS THOUGH, DESPITE HIS STRUGGLES, BARNEY CHALLIS WOULD BE SHORE-BASED BY THE NAVY AND AS FAR FROM THE ENEMY AND THE FIGHTING AS HE HAD BEEN IN CIVVY STREET.



HEAVY-HEARTED, THE ENGINEER TURNED TO SCAN THE NOTICE...

R.N. NOTICE

VOLUNTEERS ARE CALLED FOR TO CARRY OUT A SPECIAL MISSION. THE TASK CALLS FOR A HIGH STANDARD OF COURAGE, SKILL AND DEVOTION TO DUTY. NAMES TO BE GIVEN TO THE OFFICER OF THE DAY BY 1900 HRS.

FOR A LONG MINUTE, BARNEY CHALLIS READ AND RE-READ THAT DRAMATIC APPEAL. AT LAST, HIS MIND MADE UP AND HIS THROAT DRY, HE STEPPED TOWARDS HIS MOMENTOUS DESTINY.



LIEUTENANT BARTLETT LOOKED UP AS BARNEY ENTERED. HIS FIRST STARE OF SURPRISE AT THE JUNIOR OFFICER'S WORDS GAVE WAY TO A SMILE OF HIDDEN AMUSEMENT.



I'M VOLUNTEERING FOR THAT SPECIAL MISSION, LIEUTENANT, IF YOU'VE NO OBJECTION!

YOU ARE, ARE YOU, CHALLIS! WELL, WELL! I'VE NO OBJECTION, FAR FROM IT!

THE SMILE PUZZLED BARNEY. HE HAD EXPECTED THE LIEUTENANT TO PROTEST AT THE WASTE OF HIS ENGINEERING SKILL. RATHER UNEASILY, THE VOLUNTEER FOR AN UNKNOWN DANGER STEPPED OUTSIDE THE HUT...



HEY, BARNEY, THEY WANT SOME HEROES! COME AND READ THIS!

I'VE READ IT—AND I'M ONE OF THE HEROES!

FIVE OTHER OFFICERS HAD VOLUNTEERED BESIDES BARNEY. FOR THE NEXT THREE DAYS THEIR FUTURE WAS FORECAST IN BLOODTHIRSTY DETAIL BY THE OTHER MEN. ON THE FOURTH DAY THEY WERE POSTED TO A NAVAL CAMP IN THE NORTH.

BETTER YOU THAN ME, BARNEY! THEY CAN SEND ME WHERE THEY LIKE BUT I'M NOT TAKING ANY LEAP IN THE DARK BY VOLUNTEERING!

I HAD TO DO IT, CHRIS! IF I HADN'T, THE LIEUTENANT WOULD HAVE KEPT ME ASHORE TINKERING WITH ENGINES FOR THE REST OF THE WAR!



SAYING GOODBYE TO CHRIS ARMSTRONG, BARNEY CHALLIS SET OFF FOR THE UNKNOWN. IT WAS AN UNEASY JOURNEY BY TRAIN AND TRUCK, BUT AT THE END OF IT HE KNEW THE CHANCE TO FIGHT AWAITED HIM.



THE NAVAL TRUCK GROUND TO A HALT INSIDE THE WIRED PERIMETER OF A SECRET CAMP IN A LANCASHIRE VALLEY. STIFFLY THE SIX VOLUNTEERS CLIMBED DOWN. 'LAND INCIDENT SECTION' THE NOTICE BOARD HAD READ. WHAT DID IT MEAN? -

WELL, MEN, THIS IS WHAT YOU VOLUNTEERED FOR! AND I WARN YOU, SOME OF YOU ARE IN FOR A SHOCK!



IN THAT TENSE MOMENT, AS THE GRIM-FACED COMMANDER OPENED THE DOOR OF THE LOCKED HUT, BARNEY CHALLIS PRESSED EAGERLY FORWARD. INSIDE, SILENT AND OMINOUS AS A THREAT, WAS A LONG GLEAMING CYLINDER...



BARNEY HAD SEEN THAT UGLY GREY SHAPE BEFORE... IN A WRECKED WORKSHOP...



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

WITH A DESPERATELY WRY SMILE, THE ENGINEER VOICED HIS CHAGRIN...

NO QUESTIONS, SIR!
BUT I VOLUNTEERED TO HAVE
A CRACK AT THE JERRIES,
NOT TO CLEAR UP
THEIR MESS!

BELIEVE ME, CHALLIS, EVERY
TIME YOU TACKLE ONE OF THESE
THINGS YOU'LL BE HITTING THE
JERRIES — AND SAVING
BRITISH LIVES AS WELL!
ALL RIGHT, MEN, YOUR
TRAINING STARTS
TOMORROW!



THE MISSION HE HAD VOLUNTEERED FOR WAS AS LONELY AND DANGEROUS AS ANY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR. BUT THAT WAS NOT THE REASON FOR BARNEY'S IRONIC BITTERNESS.

BOMB
DISPOSAL, MY GOLLY!
THAT'S THE LAST
TIME I VOLUNTEER!

TOO TRUE!

WELL, HERE I AM TINKERING
ABOUT WITH MACHINERY AGAIN!
NO WONDER THE LIEUTENANT
AT K.A. SMILED WHEN
I VOLUNTEERED!



TO THE ENGINEER, THE ONLY WAY TO FIGHT WAS BEHIND A GUN. BOMB DISPOSAL MIGHT BE HAZARDOUS, BUT AS FAR AS HE WAS CONCERNED IT WAS ONLY TINKERING WITH MACHINERY AS HE HAD DONE ALL HIS LIFE.



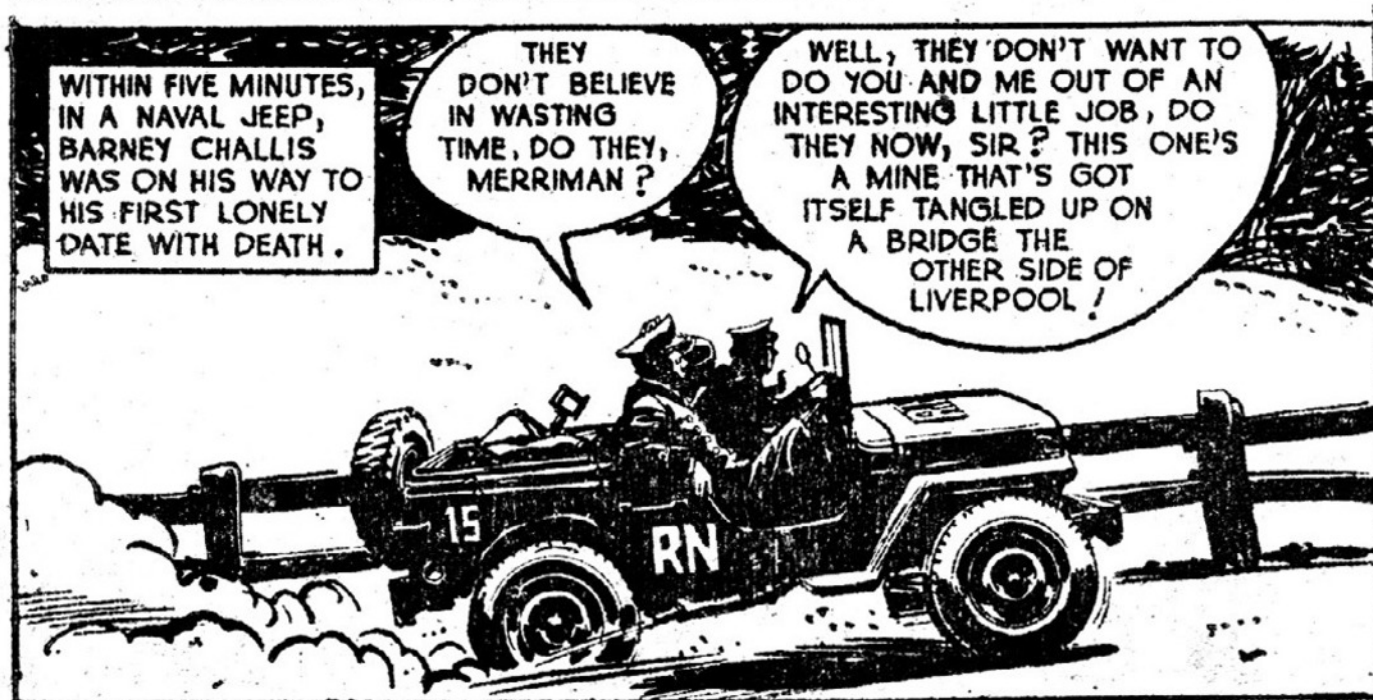
BARNEY'S ENGINEERING SKILL STOOD HIM IN GOOD STEAD NOW. RAPIDLY IN THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF TRAINING HE MASTERED THE FIENDISH SECRETS OF THE GERMAN LAND MINE. AT THE END OF THREE WEEKS OF INTENSIVE INSTRUCTION...

NICE GOING, CHALLIS! YOU KNOW HOW TO USE THOSE HANDS OF YOURS! YOU'D BETTER REPORT TO MY OFFICE TOMORROW — I THINK IT'S TIME WE PUT YOU TO WORK!



Chapter 3. LONELY ORDEAL

IT WAS OBVIOUS TO THE COMMANDER THAT SUB-LIEUTENANT CHALLIS WAS NOW READY TO TACKLE HIS FIRST LIVE MINE. WHEN AN URGENT CALL FROM NORTHERN COMMAND REACHED HIS OFFICE, HE DID NOT HESITATE.



LEADING SEAMAN SAM MERRIMAN HAD WORKED WITH THE IRONICALLY-NAMED LAND INCIDENT SECTION FOR EIGHT MONTHS. HIS SARDONIC SENSE OF HUMOUR BRACED THE NEWCOMER TO THE NAVY'S MOST DANGEROUS TRADE.



THE MINE BARNEY CHALLIS HAD TO TACKLE SWAYED FROM THE BRIDGE FIFTY FEET ABOVE THE RIVER. AND HIS ASSISTANT'S CONVERSATION WAS LITTLE COMFORT TO HIM AT THIS CHILLING MOMENT.



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

SOBERED BY THE GRIM MEANING OF THE LEADING SEAMAN'S GESTURE, BARNEY JOINED THE GROUP OF ANXIOUS MEN BY THE BARRIER.

THIS IS YOUR FIRST MINE, IS IT, SUB-LIEUTENANT? TAKE IT GENTLY—AND REMEMBER, WHEN SHE STARTS TICKING YOU'VE GOT TWELVE SECONDS TO GET CLEAR!

IT'LL TAKE ME TWELVE SECONDS TO CLIMB BACK ON TO THE BRIDGE, SIR! I'LL REMEMBER ALL RIGHT!



THE BRIDGE WAS A VITAL LINK IN THE ROAD COMMUNICATIONS OF THE MUNITION-MAKING INDUSTRIAL NORTH. THE CANISTER OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE WOULD SMASH IT WITH ONE PULVERISING BLOW—UNLESS ONE NEWLY-FLEDGED SUB-LIEUTENANT COULD DRAW ITS FANGS.

THERE GO TWO BRAVE MEN!



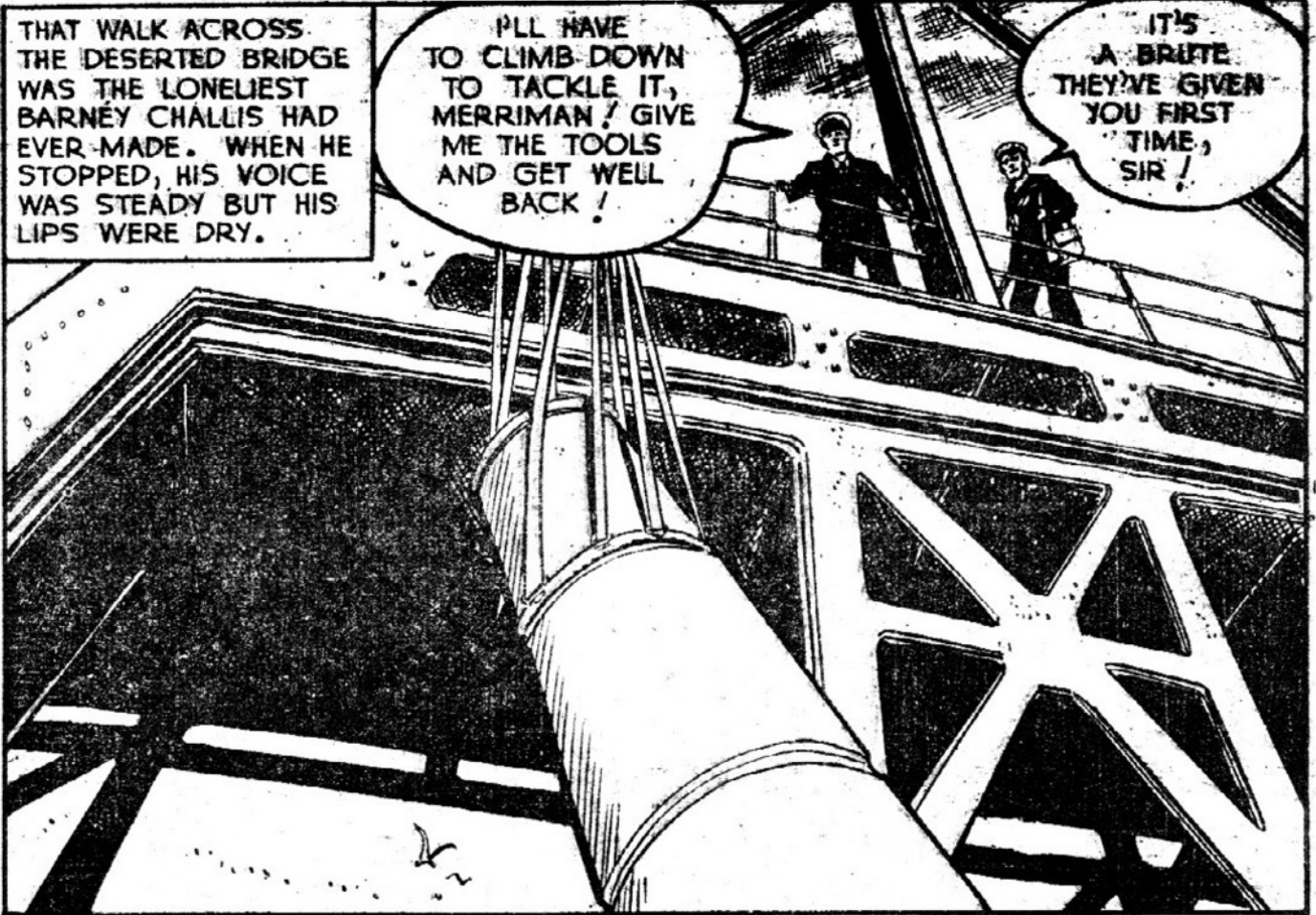
—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

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THAT WALK ACROSS THE DESERTED BRIDGE WAS THE LONELIEST BARNEY CHALLIS HAD EVER MADE. WHEN HE STOPPED, HIS VOICE WAS STEADY BUT HIS LIPS WERE DRY.

I'LL HAVE TO CLIMB DOWN TO TACKLE IT, MERRIMAN! GIVE ME THE TOOLS AND GET WELL BACK!

IT'S A BRUTE THEY'VE GIVEN YOU FIRST TIME, SIR!



MOST MINE DISPOSAL OFFICERS PREFERRED TO WORK ALONE. AT LEAST, IF THEY FAILED, THEIR ASSISTANTS STOOD AN OUTSIDE CHANCE OF ESCAPE. WITH A NOTE OF RESPECT IN HIS VOICE, LEADING SEAMAN MERRIMAN WATCHED HIS LEADER MOVE FORWARD ALONE.

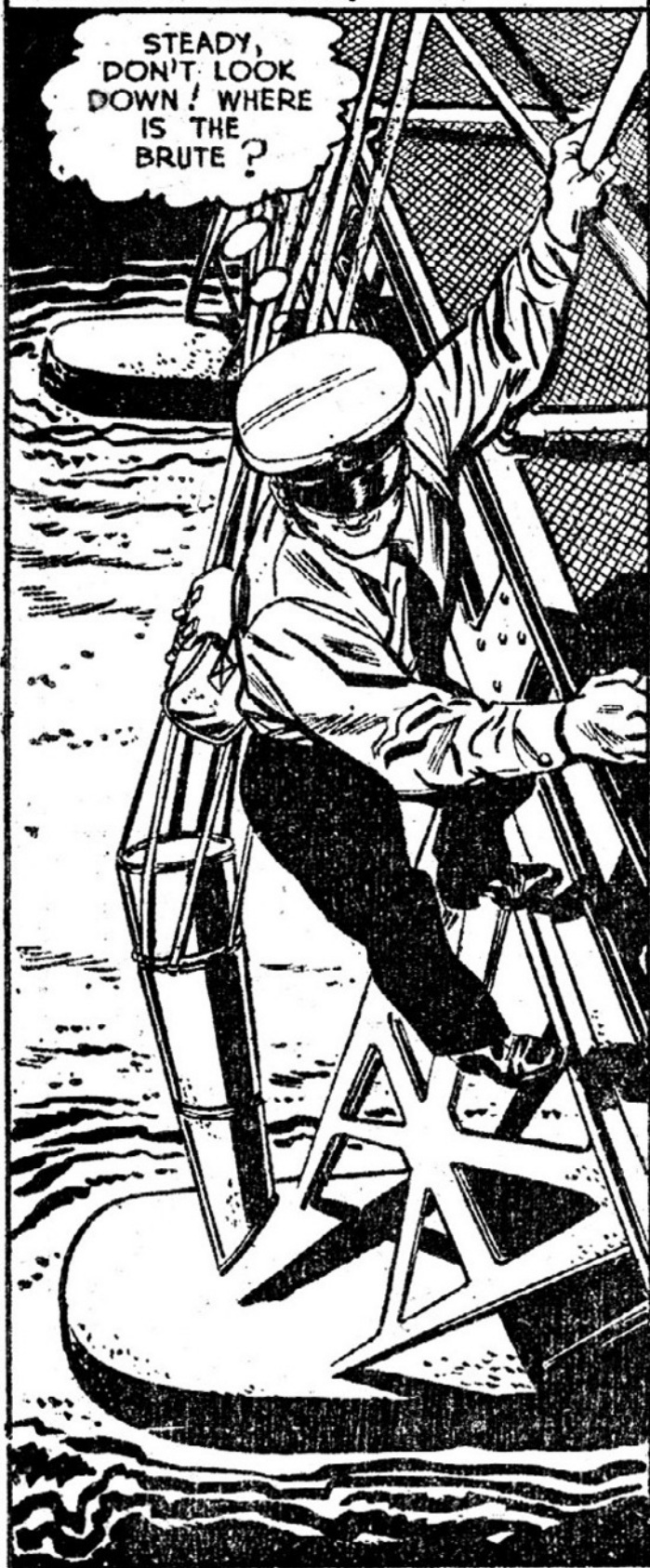
GOOD LUCK, SIR!

I'LL NEED IT! I NEVER DID LIKE HEIGHTS!



HIS BODY RIGID WITH TENSION, BARNEY SWUNG HIMSELF OVER THE STEEL GUARD RAIL. FOR A LONG MOMENT, AS HE HUNG OVER THAT STUPEFYING GULF, THE MINE SEEMED ALMOST THE LESSER OF THE TWO GRIM EVILS!

STEADY,
DON'T LOOK
DOWN! WHERE
IS THE
BRUTE?



AS HIS GROPING HAND TOUCHED THE COLD STEELY SKIN OF THE LAND-MINE, A NEW CONFIDENCE FREED BARNEY'S TENSE LIMBS. HE WAS AN ENGINEER, AND THIS WAS JUST ANOTHER ENGINEERING PROBLEM.

AH!
THAT'S BETTER!
AND THE FUSE IS ON
THIS SIDE, TOO!
NOW, THE
KEEP RING
FIRST!

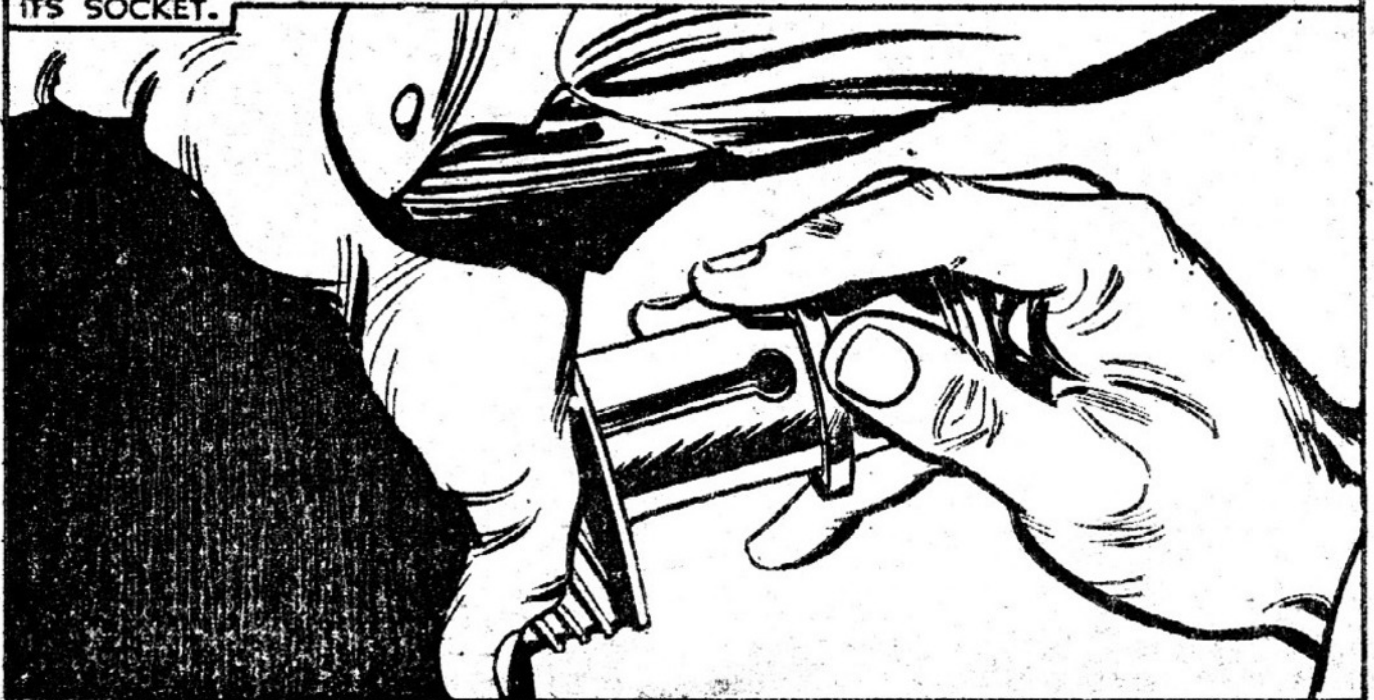


THE FIRST DELICATE TASK WAS TO UNSCREW THE KEEP RING WHICH HELD THE FUSE IN PLACE. DEFTLY, WITH THE SKILLED HANDS OF A BORN ENGINEER, BARNEY BEGAN TO WORK AT THE STEEL RING.

GENTLY...
GENTLY... GOT
IT! NOW
FOR THE
FUSE!



THIS WAS THE MOST DANGEROUS MOMENT OF ALL. ONE FALSE MOVE AND THE DEADLY MECHANISM WOULD CLICK INTO ACTION. WITH 1500 LBS OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE UNDER HIS GENTLE FINGERS, BARNEY CHALLIS EASED THE FUSE OUT OF ITS SOCKET.



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

THE FUSE WAS STILL HALF WITHDRAWN WHEN A SUDDEN GUST OF WIND SHOOK THE GUY ROPES OF THE PARACHUTE. THE HEAVY CANISTER LURCHED UNDER BARNEY'S HAND, SWAYED HEAVILY, SWUNG AWAY...

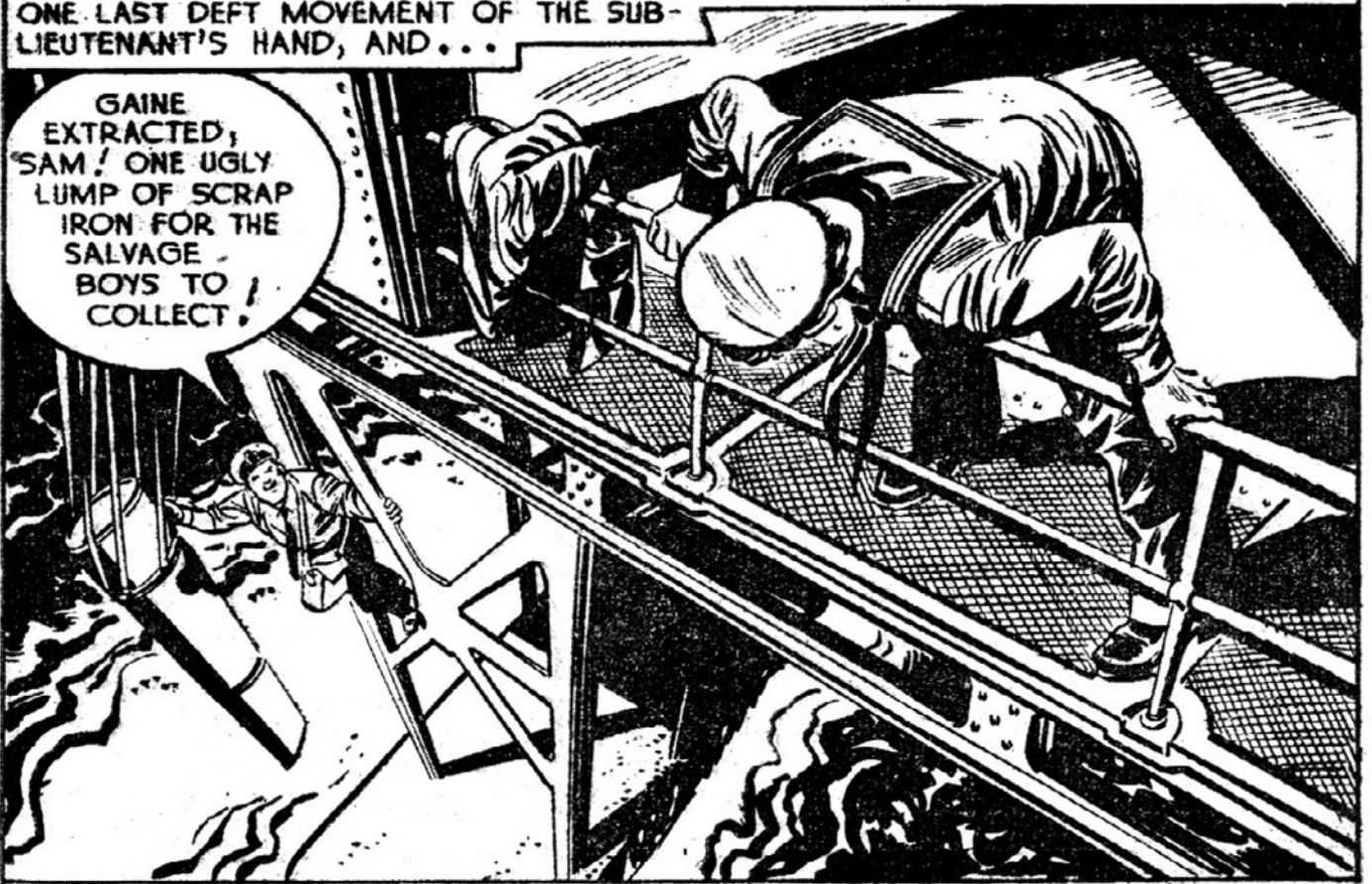


A GROAN WRENCHED FROM BARNEY'S TAUT THROAT. WITH THE FUSE STILL BURIED IN ITS LETHAL CASE, THE MINE HUNG ALMOST OUT OF REACH. HANGING PERILOUSLY BY ONE HAND, BARNEY GROPED FOR THE FUSE...



THE WORST MOMENT WAS OVER. BUT STILL THE GAINE, THE SMALL CHARGE WHICH FIRED THE PRIMERS AND THROUGH THEM THE MAIN CHARGE HAD TO BE REMOVED. ONE LAST DEFT MOVEMENT OF THE SUB-LIEUTENANT'S HAND, AND...

GAINE
EXTRACTED,
SAM! ONE UGLY
LUMP OF SCRAP
IRON FOR THE
SALVAGE
BOYS TO
COLLECT!



AS SAM'S HAND HELPED HIM BACK TO SAFETY, THE TENSION DRAINED OUT OF BARNEY'S LIMBS AND LEFT THEM SHAKING. BUT HIS VOICE WAS STEADY...

AS
NICE A BIT OF
WORK AS
I EVER SAW,
SIR!

WELL,
AT LEAST I'VE
BROKEN MY
DUCK, SAM!



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!!

THE ENGINEER WAS NOT A VAIN MAN. HE HAD DONE THE JOB OF WORK HE HAD BEEN TRAINED FOR. THE ADMIRATION IN THE FACES OF THE MEN RUNNING TOWARDS HIM BROUGHT A CAUSTIC TONE INTO HIS VOICE.



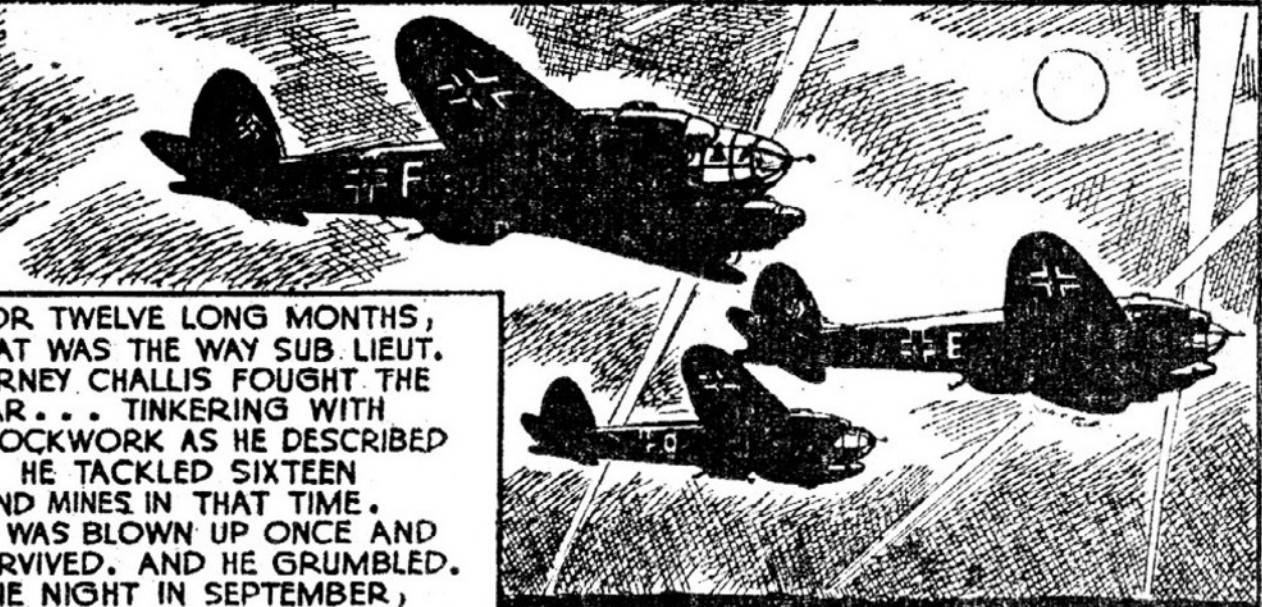
SHAKING THEMSELVES FREE OF THE FERVENT CONGRATULATIONS, THE TWO BOMB DISPOSAL MEN CLIMBED BACK INTO THEIR JEEP. AND BARNEY CHALLIS REMEMBERED AGAIN, BITTERLY, HIS OLD GRIEVANCE.

NOW IT'S BACK TO HEADQUARTERS, SIR, AND WAIT FOR THE JERRIES TO DROP ANOTHER OF THOSE SO-AND-SO'S!

WHAT A WAY TO FIGHT A WAR, SAM! TINKERING WITH BLESSED CLOCKWORK!



Chapter 4. TEN SECONDS



FOR TWELVE LONG MONTHS, THAT WAS THE WAY SUB. LIEUT. BARNEY CHALLIS FOUGHT THE WAR... TINKERING WITH CLOCKWORK AS HE DESCRIBED IT. HE TACKLED SIXTEEN LAND MINES IN THAT TIME. HE WAS BLOWN UP ONCE AND SURVIVED. AND HE GRUMBLED. ONE NIGHT IN SEPTEMBER, 1943, GERMAN BOMBERS SLIPPED THROUGH THE FIGHTER DEFENCES GUARDING LONDON...

BY THIS TIME, BARNEY AND SAM HAD DEVELOPED A SIXTH SENSE ABOUT ENEMY RAIDERS...

HERE THEY COME AGAIN, SAM! BETTER SHUT THE DOOR, OR PULL THE BLACKOUT CURTAINS!

WE'LL BE ON THE JOB AGAIN TONIGHT, SIR, THAT'S FOR SURE!

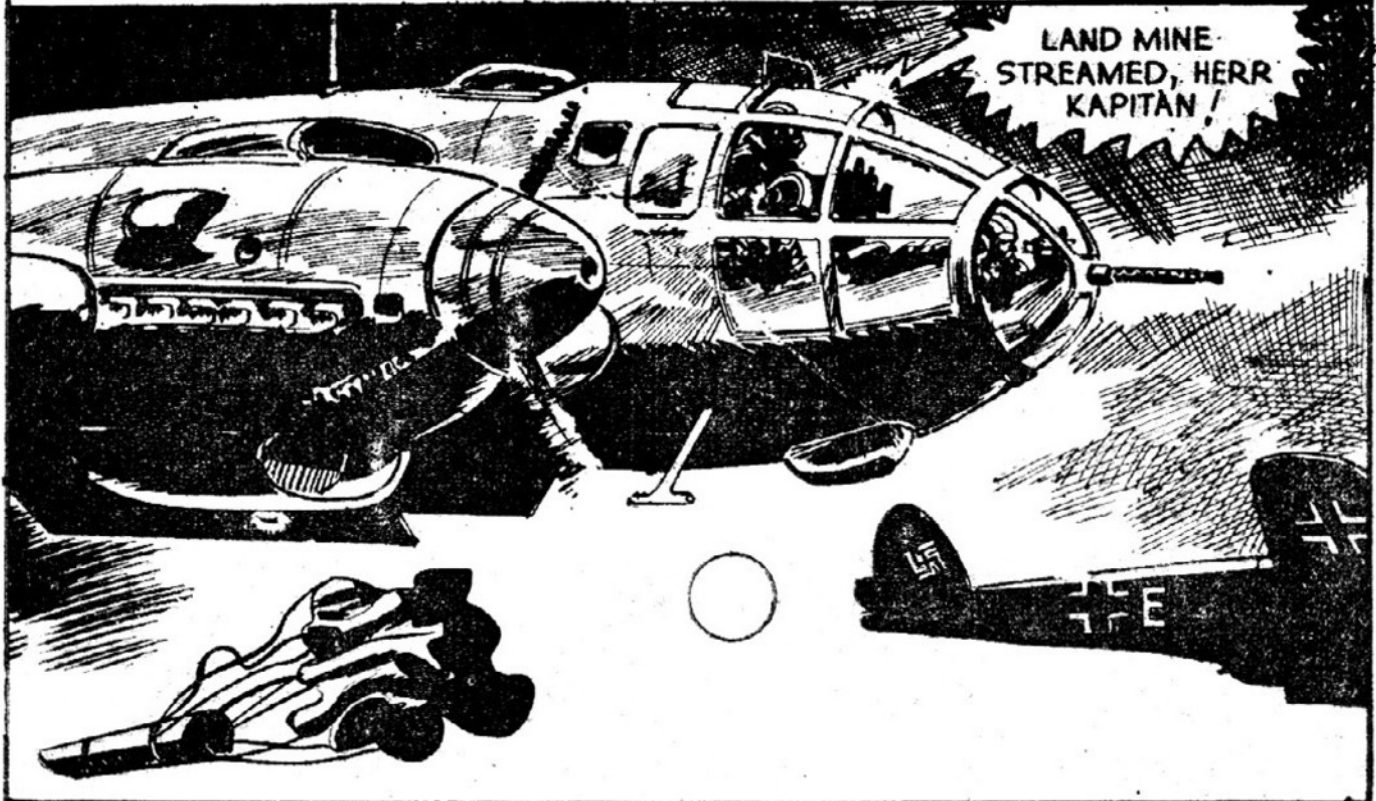
THREE HEINKELS CAME IN HIGH OVER THE THAMES ESTUARY THAT MOONLIT NIGHT. THE OMINOUS THROB OF THEIR ENGINES ALERTED BARNEY IN HIS HEADQUARTERS EAST OF THE CAPITAL. IT ALSO REACHED THE EARS OF A NAVAL OFFICER DRIVING LIGHTHEARTEDLY INTO LONDON FROM THE COAST.



CHRIS ARMSTRONG, NOW COMMANDING AN M.T.B. OF THE DOVER PATROL, HAD BEEN SUMMONED TO A SECRET CONFERENCE AT THE ADMIRALTY. HE WAS SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A GAY EVENING AWAY FROM THE SOMBRE REALITY OF WAR.



WHILE CHRIS ARMSTRONG AND A SCORE OF OTHER OFFICERS DANCED AND LAUGHED AT THE CORONET CLUB IN SOHO, TWENTY THOUSAND FEET ABOVE THEM THEIR GERMAN ENEMY FOUGHT A DESPICABLE AND UNCONTESTED BATTLE...



THE SINISTER GREY SHAPE SWAYED HEAVILY UNDER ITS PARACHUTE. BELOW IT THE ROOF-LINE OF THE CITY, SCARRED BY THE BATTLE WHICH HAD RAGED ABOVE IT FOR TWO BITTER YEARS, SEEMED TO AWAIT ITS VIOLENT COMING WITH STONY INDIFFERENCE.



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

IT WAS THE DOMED ROOF OF THE CORONET CLUB WHICH THE LAND MINE HIT. WITH A SHATTERING CRASH OF SPLINTERED BEAMS AND FALLING PLASTER, IT FELL INTO THE CLUB BELOW AND BROUGHT PANIC IN ITS WAKE.

DON'T PANIC! IT HASN'T GONE OFF! MAKE FOR THE FIRE EXIT AND TAKE IT EASY!

OH!



ERECT IN THE LURCHING SPOTLIGHT, CHRIS ARMSTRONG HAD QUICKLY RECOVERED HIS WITS. THE TONE OF COMMAND IN HIS VOICE STEADIED HIS TERROR-STRICKEN COMPANIONS. IN A DARKNESS CHOKING WITH DUST, THE REVELLERS STUMBLERED OUT.

IT'S A LAND MINE ALL RIGHT, SIR! MAKE IT SNAPPY! EVERYONE BEHIND THE BARRIER WHEN YOU GET OUTSIDE!



THE CIVIL DEFENCE SERVICES HAD CLOSED IN QUICKLY. ALREADY THE AREA AROUND THE CORONET CLUB HAD BEEN EVACUATED. AT A BARRIER SET UP IN A NARROW STREET...



CHRIS ARMSTRONG HAD NOT REALISED THAT NAVAL OFFICERS DEALT WITH THESE TREACHEROUS WEAPONS. HE WONDERED WHAT SORT OF MEN DID THIS NERVE-SHATTERING JOB. WITHIN TEN MINUTES, HE KNEW...



A STARE OF SHEER AMAZEMENT WAS CHRIS ARMSTRONG'S FIRST GREETING FOR HIS FELLOW CADET. SLOWLY IT GAVE WAY TO A GRIN OF DELIGHTED ADMIRATION.



SO OLD BARNEY CHALLIS, WITH HIS URGE TO FIGHT BEHIND A GUN AND HIS KNACK WITH MACHINERY, WAS DOING THIS QUEER JOB. THE YOUNG OFFICER HAD TO SMILE.



ONLY WHEN BARNEY CHALLIS MOVED FORWARD BEYOND THE BARRIER DID CHRIS REALISE THE BRAVERY OF THIS LONELY MAN. IMPULSIVELY HE PUSHED HIMSELF FORWARD...

HEY, BARNEY,
I'M COMING WITH
YOU! DON'T ARGUE!
I CAN SHOW YOU
WHERE THAT LAND
MINE IS!

PERHAPS YOU CAN AT
THAT! ALL RIGHT THEN,
BUT STAY CLOSE TO
SAM HERE!



BARNEY ALLOWED THE YOUNG
OFFICER TO ACCOMPANY HIM.
TOGETHER THE THREE NAVY
MEN WALKED INTO THE OMINOUS
SHADOWS OF THE DESERTED
CLUB...

FIX THE
SPOTLIGHT ON THE
MINE, WILL YOU,
CHRIS! TOOLS,
SAM!

AYE,
AYE, SIR!



CHRIS FOUND HIS WAY TO THE TINY PROJECTION ROOM ABOVE THE DANCE FLOOR. QUICKLY HE SWUNG THE SPOTLIGHT TOWARDS THE LAND MINE. HIS NERVES TENSED.

PHEW, IT
MAKES ME SWEAT
EVEN TO WATCH
HIM!



IN THAT LITTLE POOL OF NAKED LIGHT, BARNEY CHALLIS GROPED WITH DELICATE FINGERS AT THE TREACHEROUS HEART OF THE GREAT BOMB. SUDDENLY A SHARP CRY BROKE FROM THE WATCHING SAM MERRIMAN...

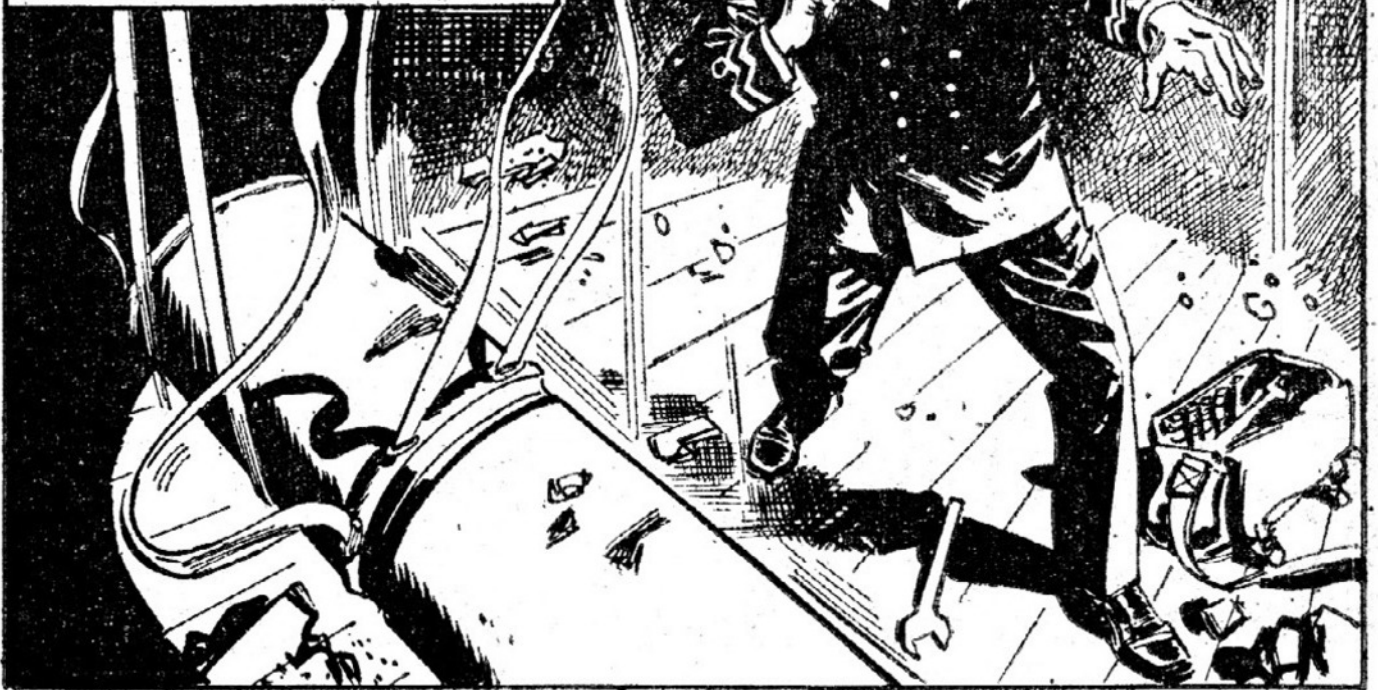
KEEP RING
UNSCREWED!

WATCH
IT, SIR! THE
ROPES
HAVE GONE
SLACK!



HIGH ABOVE THE DANCE FLOOR, A SHATTERED BEAM HAD SNAPPED, THE PARACHUTE ROPES SAGGED, THROWING THE WEIGHT OF THE PONDEROUS LAND MINE ON TO THE FLIMSY STAGE. THE BOARDS GROANED.

THAT'S
TORN IT, SAM!
**SHE'S
TICKING!**



AS THE LAND MINE LURCHED ON TO ITS SIDE, BARNEY'S QUICK EAR HAD HEARD THE DRY SOUND OF DEATH. THE MOVEMENT HAD SET THE MECHANISM OF THE BOMB IN ACTION...

WHAT
DOES IT MEAN,
THE TICKING?

IT MEANS THE LIEUTENANT'S GOT
TWELVE SECONDS TO DE-FUSE THAT
MINE BEFORE THE WHOLE LOT
GOES UP! TEN SECONDS
NOW, SIR!



BETWEEN BARNEY CHALLIS AND
ETERNITY — **EIGHT SECONDS...**

DON'T HURRY IT!
THAT'S THE FUSE
OUT — NOW
FOR THE
PRIMERS!



UNHURRIEDLY WITH A COOL PRECISION BORN OF BITTER EXPERIENCE, BARNEY
WITHDREW THE FUSE. AGAIN HE BENT OVER THE DEADLY MINE. DEATH TICKED ON
INEXORABLY UNDER HIS FINGERS...

THREE
SECONDS
TO GO,
SIR!



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

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THE ENGINEER'S STEADY HANDS TOUCHED THE PRIMERS WITH ANNIHILATION THREE SECONDS AWAY... TWO SECONDS...

DONE IT! TWO SECONDS TO SPARE! THAT'S OUR BEST YET, SAM!

PHEW!



BARNEY'S CHEERFUL VOICE RELEASED THE TENSION IN CHRIS ARMSTRONG'S THROAT WITH A SOB OF RELIEF. THE AGONY OF THOSE TWELVE SECONDS WAS TO WAKE HIM SWEATING IN THE NIGHT FOR YEARS TO COME...

I'M SHAKING LIKE A LEAF! WHAT ABOUT A DRINK, BARNEY?

NO CAN DO, CHRIS! THERE MIGHT BE ANOTHER CALL TONIGHT. AND TOMORROW I'M TIED UP AT THE ADMIRALTY!



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

AS THE THREE MEN CAME OUT INTO THE COOL DARKNESS,
AND BARNEY CLIMBED INTO HIS JEEP...

I'M GOING TO THE
ADMIRALTY TOMORROW, TOO!
WE MIGHT SEE EACH OTHER!
BEFORE I GO BACK TO DOVER
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE
THAT DRINK— ON ME AND
THE POPULATION OF
LONDON!

DOVER, EH?
LUCKY BLIGHTER, THEY
NEVER DID GIVE ME
THAT CHANCE TO
FIGHT!



CHRIS ARMSTRONG REALISED,
WITH A SHOCK OF AMUSEMENT,
THAT THE STUBBORN
ENGINEER'S CONTINUAL LIFE
OF PERIL HAD NOT CHANGED
HIM AT ALL. HE WAS STILL
THE SAME BARNEY CHALLIS
WHO HAD SO DESPERATELY —
AND UNSUCCESSFULLY —
VOLUNTEERED AT THE KING
ALFRED.

HE STILL WANTS TO FIGHT! AFTER A YEAR OF
DODGING DEATH WITH THOSE HELLISH LAND MINES,
HE STILL THINKS A FIGHT WOULD BE MORE
EXCITING! WELL, I HOPE I'LL RUN INTO HIM
AT THE ADMIRALTY
TOMORROW!



Chapter 5. ON AN ENEMY SHORE

NEXT MORNING, CHRIS ARMSTRONG MADE HIS WAY TO THE ADMIRALTY. HE WAS THREE MINUTES LATE WHEN HE REACHED THE CONFERENCE ROOM AND THE OTHER OFFICERS WERE ALREADY GATHERED AT THE MAP-STREWN TABLE.

SORRY I'M LATE, GENTLEMEN!

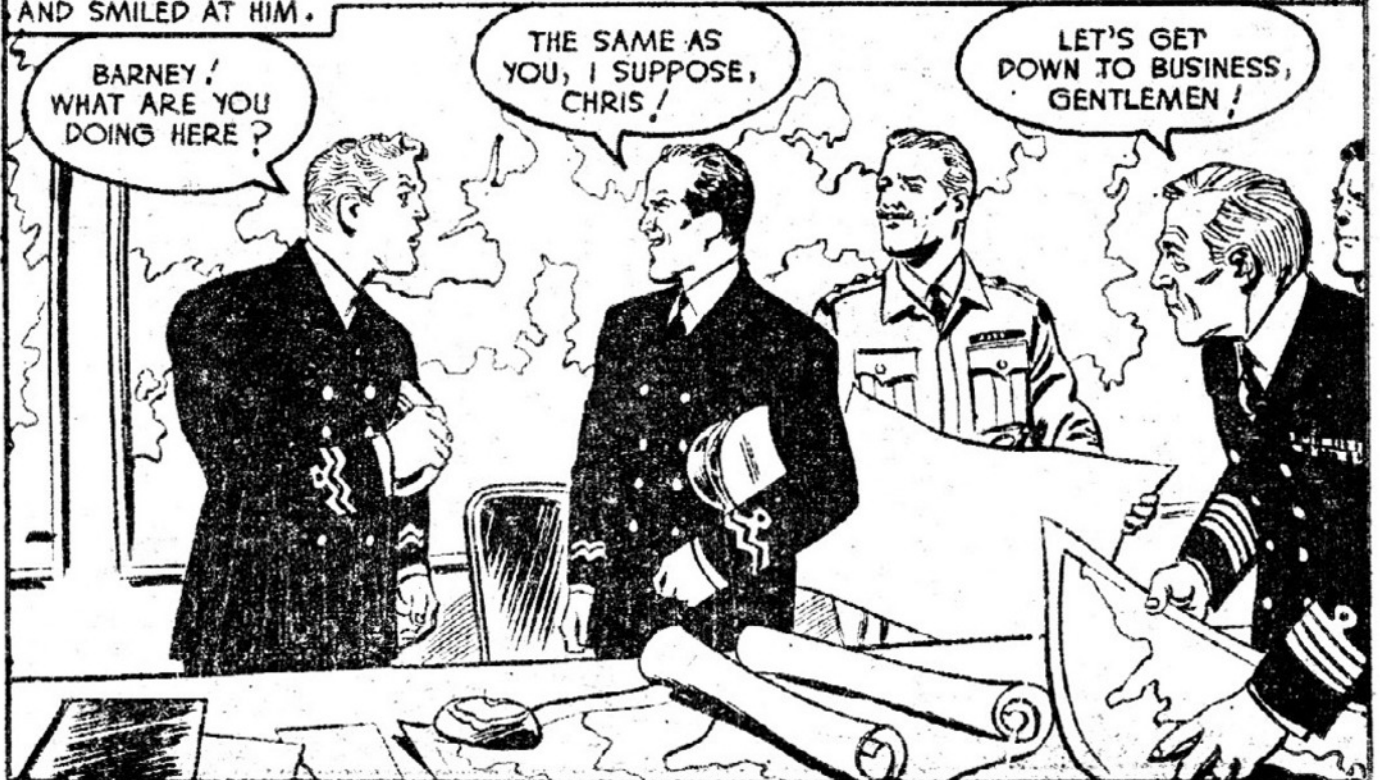


AS CHRIS ARMSTRONG SPOKE, THE GROUP OF NAVAL AND ARMY OFFICERS BROKE UP. THE BALDING LIEUTENANT WITH THE TWO WAVY STRIPES OF THE R.N.V.R. TURNED... AND SMILED AT HIM.

BARNEY!
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?

THE SAME AS
YOU, I SUPPOSE,
CHRIS!

LET'S GET
DOWN TO BUSINESS,
GENTLEMEN!



THE NAVAL CAPTAIN CUT SHORT THE MUTUAL SURPRISE OF THE TWO OFFICERS. THE CONFERENCE BEGAN...

THAT'S UNDERSTOOD THEN, GENTLEMEN! WHEN THE WEATHER'S RIGHT, YOUR JOB WILL BE TO RECONNOITRE A SUITABLE BEACH ON THE NORMANDY COAST! IT IS VITAL FOR US TO HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT THOSE BEACHES BEFORE WE INVADE!



PREPARATIONS FOR THE ALLIED INVASION OF OCCUPIED FRANCE WERE ALREADY BEING SET IN MOTION.

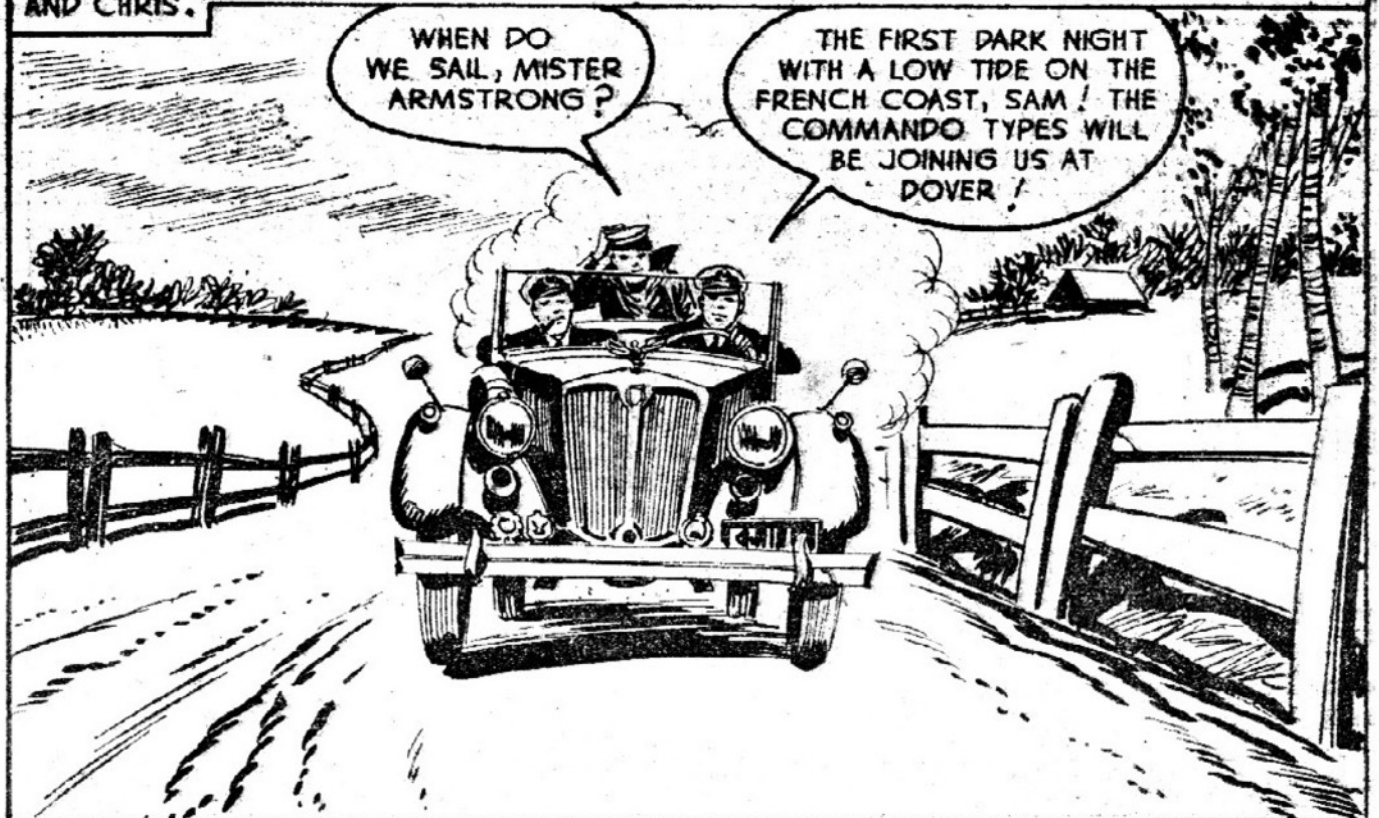
MAJOR DRUMMOND, YOUR COMMANDOS WILL BRING BACK TWO PRISONERS FOR INTERROGATION! YOU, LIEUTENANT CHALLIS, WILL GATHER INFORMATION ON THE SORT OF BOOBY TRAP AND OBSTRUCTION THE GERMANS HAVE SOWN ON THE BEACHES! LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG HERE WILL COMMAND THE M.T.B. YOU'LL MAKE THE TRIP IN!



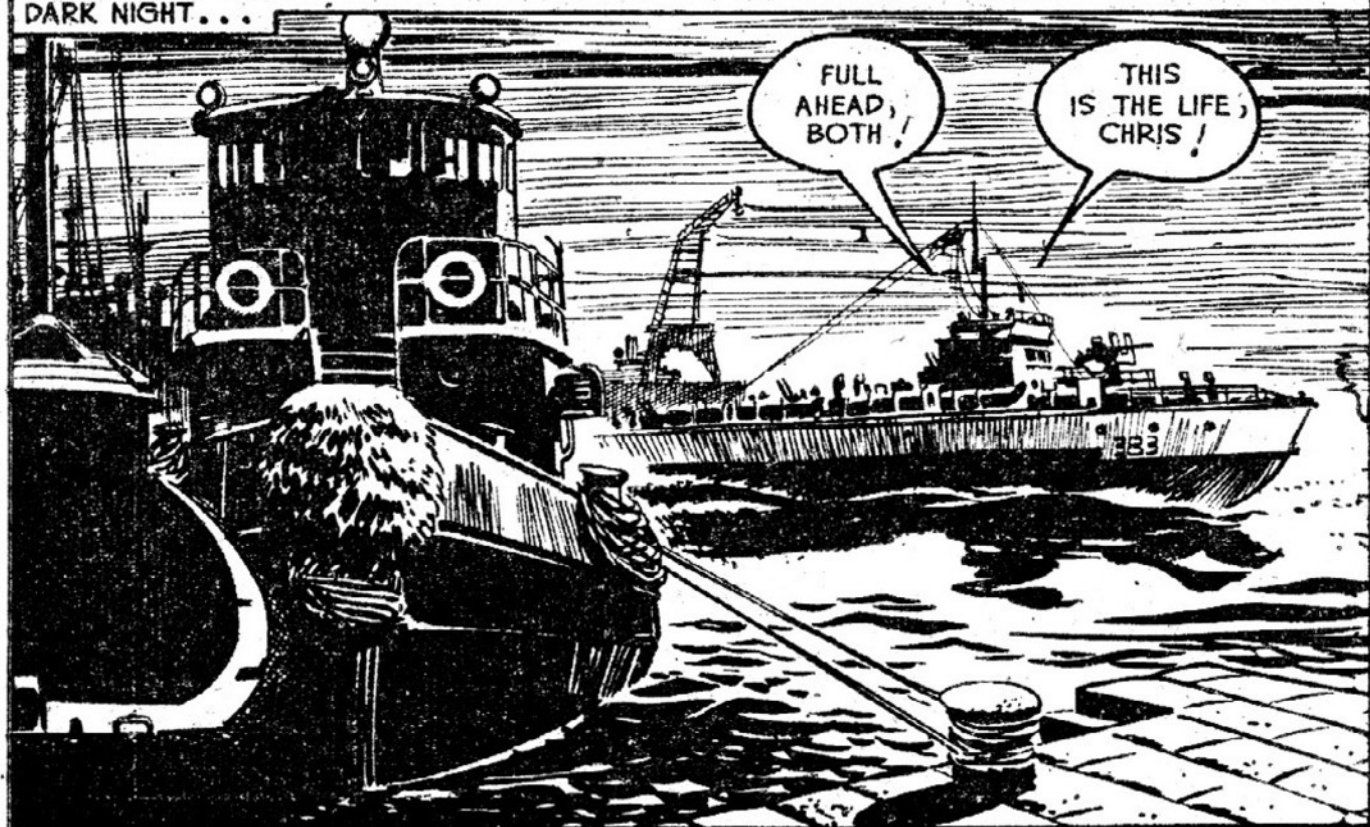
BARNEY AND CHRIS WERE TO SAIL TOGETHER ON THIS VITAL LITTLE EXPEDITION. THE ENGINEER'S EYES GLEAMED AS HE LEFT THE ROOM WITH CHRIS.



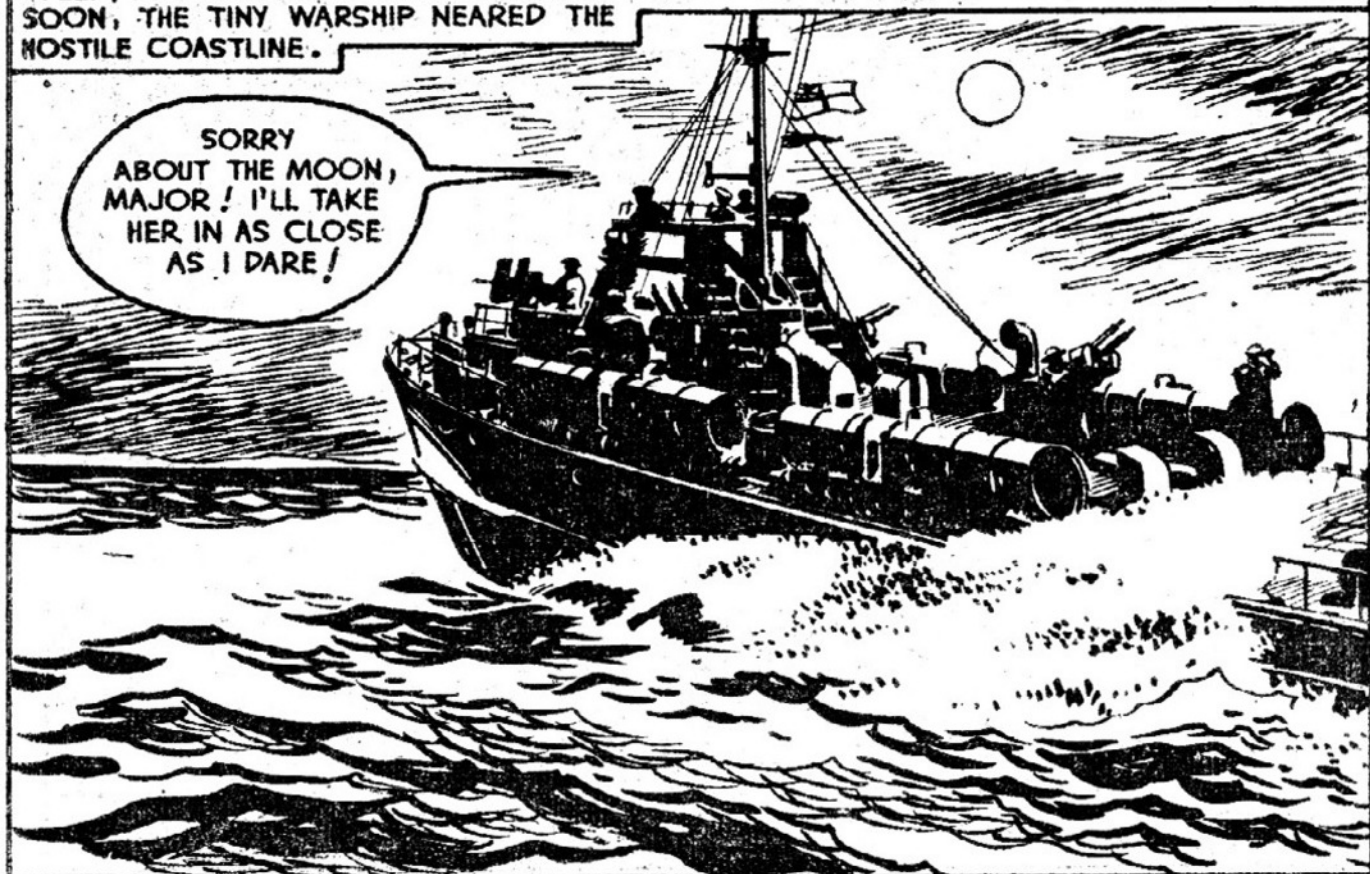
WHATEVER HAPPENED, AT LAST BARNEY CHALLIS WOULD BE WITHIN GUNSHOT OF THE ENEMY. HE WAS GRINNING AS HE SET OUT FOR THE COAST LATER THAT DAY WITH SAM AND CHRIS.



THE NEXT DAY, FOUR TOUGH COMMANDOS CAME ABOARD CHRIS ARMSTRONG'S M.T.B. PLANS WERE WORKED OUT AND AGREED IN THE WEEK WHICH FOLLOWED. AT LAST, ONE DARK NIGHT...



BARNEY STOOD ON THE BRIDGE AS THE M.T.B. KNIFED THROUGH THE WATER AT TOP SPEED, RELISHING THE TANGY SEA AIR AND THE PROMISE OF APPROACHING ACTION. SOON, THE TINY WARSHIP NEARED THE HOSTILE COASTLINE.



THE NINE-TENTHS CLOUD THE MET. EXPERTS HAD FORECAST HAD LIFTED TO REVEAL A FULL, CLEAR MOON. BUT IT WAS TOO LATE TO TURN BACK. ENGINES THROTTLED DOWN THE M.T.B. EASED IN TO SHALLOW WATER...

QUIETLY
DOES IT, MEN!
NO FIRING
UNLESS WE
HAVE TO!

READY,
SAM? LET'S SEE
WHAT THE JERRIES
HAVE COOKED UP
FOR OUR BOYS!

THE COMMANDO PATROL WADED ASHORE AND DISAPPEARED AS SILENTLY AS SHADOWS TO FERRET OUT THE GERMANS. BARNEY WATCHED THEM GO RELUCTANTLY. HIS OWN TASK HELD NO SUCH PROMISE OF EXCITEMENT FOR HIM...

HERE WE ARE, SAM! WE'LL
TAKE THIS ONE TO BITS!

DO WE HAVE
TO, SIR? COULDN'T
WE JUST HAVE
A DEKKO AT
IT?



YET DESPITE HIMSELF, AS HE DROPPED TO HIS KNEES BESIDE THE MYSTERIOUS BLACK BOX, BARNEY CHALLIS WAS GRIPPED BY THE OLD FASCINATION FOR MACHINERY. ABSORBED IN HIS DANGEROUS WORK, THE ENGINEER DID NOT SEE THE STEALTHY MOVEMENT ABOVE HIM IN THE DUNES.



THE COOL, QUICK HANDS OF THE ENGINEER UNRAVELLED THE DEADLY SECRET OF THE MINE IN A FEW MINUTES. BUT A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, THE BARREL OF A GERMAN RIFEE SLOWLY LIFTED AND STEADIED...



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

47

ENRAGED AT THE CALM AND UNHURRIED MOVEMENTS OF THE ENGLISHMEN ON THE BEACH, THE GERMAN GUARDS AIMED TO SHOOT TO KILL. BUT THE SHADOWS WHICH ROSE SUDDENLY BEHIND THEM WERE SOLID FLESH AND BONE.



BARNEY AND SAM SAW THE TWO MENACING FIGURES ON THE SKYLINE CUT DOWN AS THOUGH BY A SCYTHE. A STEEL TIPPED BOOT SCRAPPED ON STONE. BREATH SIGHED IN A SUDDENLY CONSTRICTED THROAT. A MOMENT LATER...



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

SWIFTLY, SILENTLY, THE OPERATION WAS OVER. AND STILL BARNEY CHALLIS AND HIS TOUGH ASSISTANT HAD NOT TAKEN PART IN WHAT THEY LOOKED UPON AS THE REAL THING.



SETTLING DOWN ON THE BRIDGE OF THE M.T.B. AS IT SET COURSE FOR ENGLAND, BARNEY FORGOT HIS CHAGRIN IN A MINUTE EXAMINATION OF THE MINE. HE DID NOT NOTICE THAT CHRIS ARMSTRONG WAS WATCHING HIM INTENTLY...



THE YOUNG NAVAL OFFICER HAD A THOUGHTFUL EXPRESSION ON HIS BLUNT YOUNG FACE!

I'VE BEEN THINKING!
I SUPPOSE THEY'LL NEED
MEN TO GO IN BEFORE THE
INVASION FLEET TO CLEAR
THOSE BOOBY TRAPS! THEY'LL
USE NAVY FROGMEN,
PROBABLY — AND I'M
A GOOD
SWIMMER...



BARNEY PAID LITTLE ATTENTION TO CHRIS ARMSTRONG'S WORDS AT THE TIME. THE M.T.B. WAS ENTERING HOME WATERS AND AN EAGER CAPTAIN R.N. CAME TO THE DOCKSIDE TO MEET THEM.

YOU DID A FIRST CLASS JOB, GENTLEMEN!
THE INFORMATION YOU BROUGHT BACK WILL BE
VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE INVASION! YOU
MAY GO NOW, BUT I SHALL WANT YOU
LATER, CHALLIS!

COULD I HAVE
A WORD WITH YOU,
CAPTAIN?



THE INTERROGATION OVER, THE CAPTAIN DISMISSED THE OFFICERS IN HIGH GOOD HUMOUR. BUT OUTSIDE, BARNEY REMEMBERED CHRIS' WORDS ON THE M.T.B. AND WONDERED...



HARDLY HAD SAM BLURTED OUT HIS NEWS THAN THE CAPTAIN APPEARED TO CONFIRM IT... AND TO CAP IT WITH AN EVEN BIGGER SURPRISE.

I SEE MY SECRETARY HAS BEEN SPREADING RUMOURS, MISTER CHALLIS! WELL, THEY HAPPEN TO BE TRUE! COME INSIDE AND I'LL GIVE YOU YOUR NEW ORDERS!

BUT FIRST LET ME INTRODUCE YOUR FIRST TRAINEE — LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG!

CHRIS! YOU VOLUNTEERED, YOU YOUNG DEVIL!



IN THE DAYS WHICH FOLLOWED, BARNEY TEASED HIS FRIEND ABOUT THE LEAP IN THE DARK HE HAD TAKEN AGAINST HIS OWN EARLIER ADVICE. BUT HE UNDERSTOOD CHRIS' DESIRE FOR ACTION ONLY TOO WELL. AND SOON TRAINING STARTED...

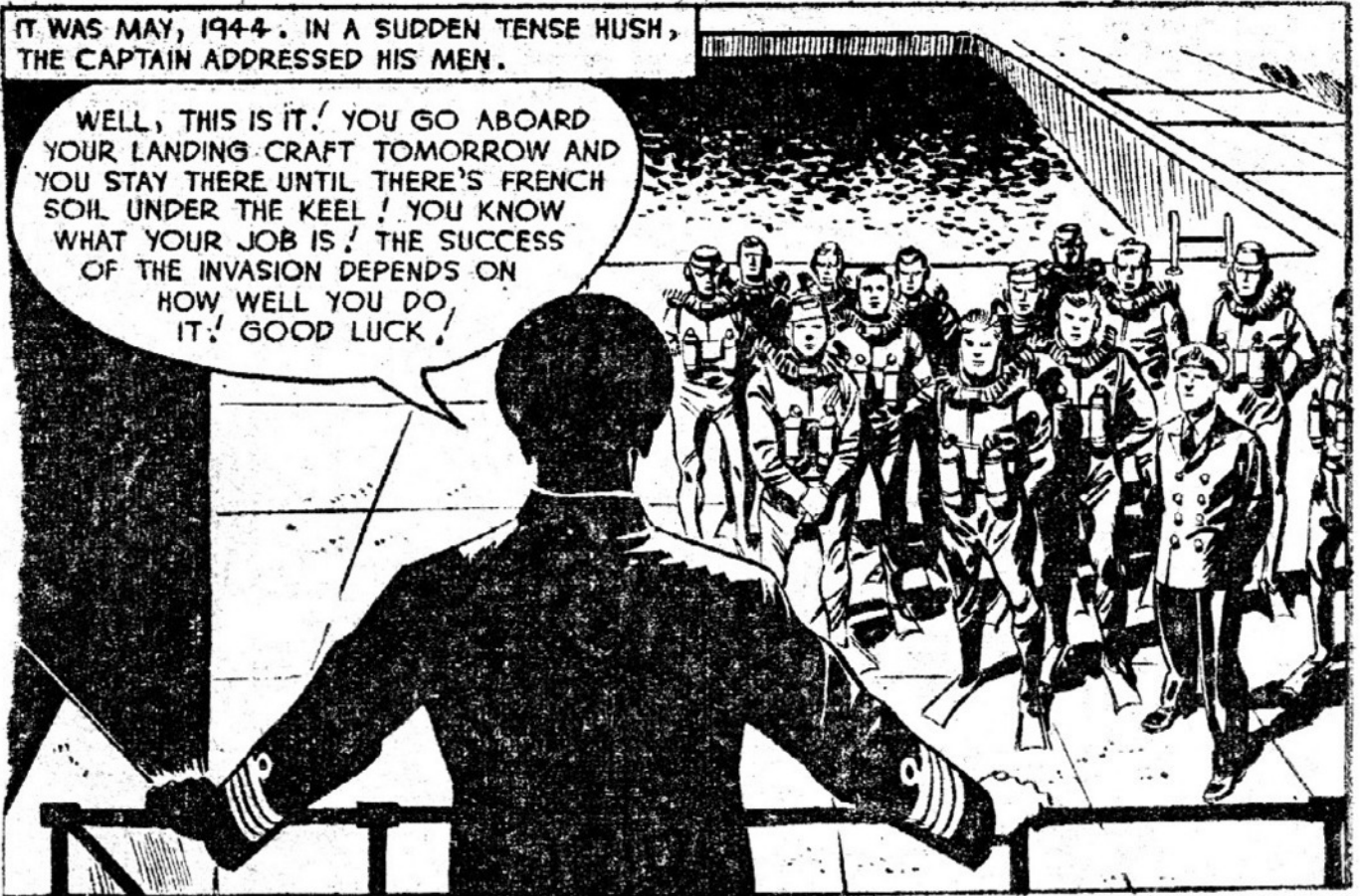


ALL THROUGH THE WINTER MONTHS OF 1944, THE GRIM LESSONS OF UNDERWATER WARFARE WERE TAUGHT AND TAUGHT AGAIN. UNTIL, ONE DAY IN THE SPRING...



IT WAS MAY, 1944. IN A SUDDEN TENSE HUSH, THE CAPTAIN ADDRESSED HIS MEN.

WELL, THIS IS IT! YOU GO ABOARD YOUR LANDING CRAFT TOMORROW AND YOU STAY THERE UNTIL THERE'S FRENCH SOIL UNDER THE KEEL! YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR JOB IS! THE SUCCESS OF THE INVASION DEPENDS ON HOW WELL YOU DO IT! GOOD LUCK!



THAT NIGHT THE TEAM OF NAVAL FROGMEN SET OUT FOR A PORT ON THE SOUTH COAST. THE GREATEST ADVENTURE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN!

WHAT'S WRONG, BARNEY? DID YOU GET OUR SAILING ORDERS?

THE BALLOON GOES UP AT DAWN TOMORROW, CHRIS! BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT BOTHERS ME! THE CAPTAIN SAYS I'M TO SUPERINTEND OPERATIONS FROM THE LANDING CRAFT. APPARENTLY, I'M TOO VALUABLE TO RISK MY LIFE IN THE WATER!



Chapter 6. **DELAYED ACTION**

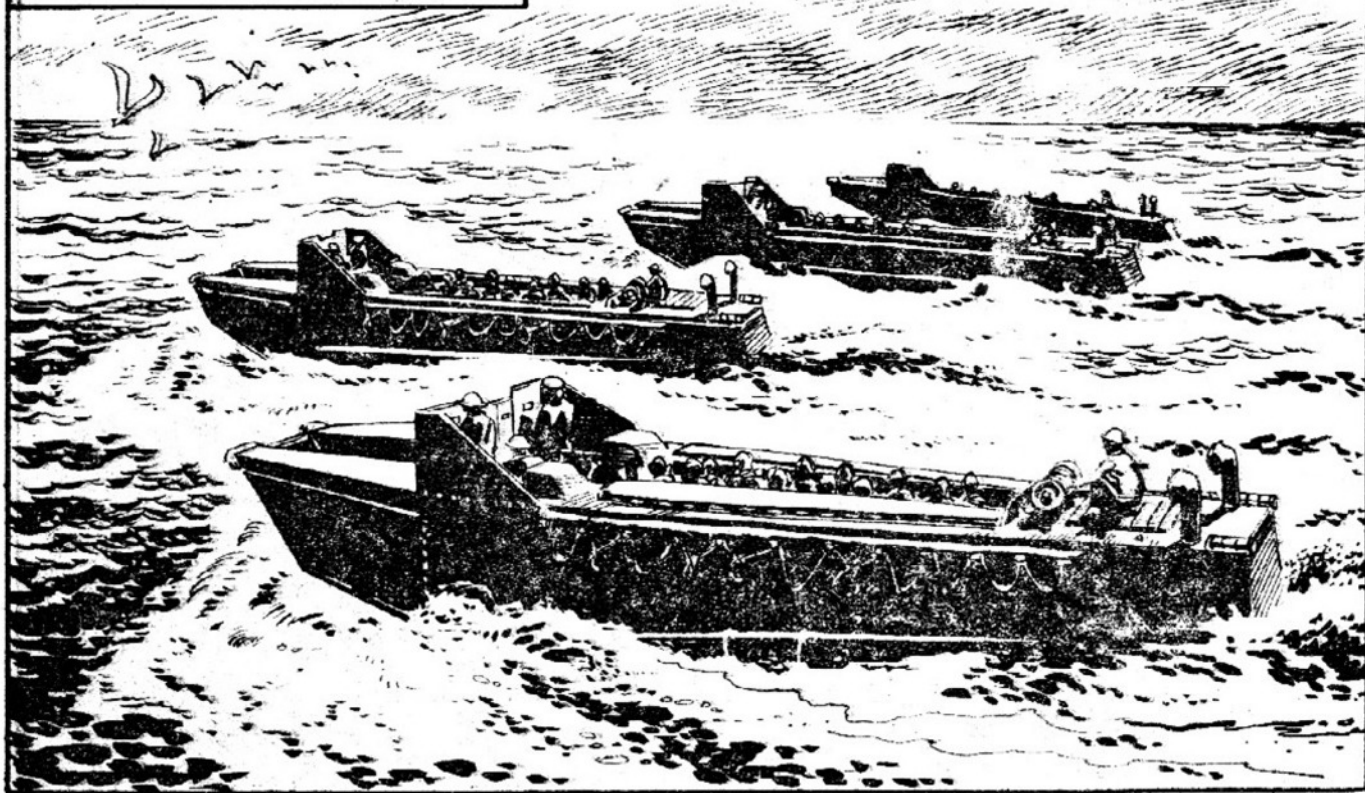
AS DARKNESS FELL ON D-DAY MINUS ONE, PERHAPS ONLY A SINGLE MAN OF THAT GREAT COMPANY WHICH WAS DESTINED TO TAKE PART IN HISTORY WAS BITTERLY AGGRIEVED...

HERE
WE GO,
BARNEY!
CHEER
UP!

JUST A
PASSENGER,
CHRIS, THAT'S
ME!



YET AGAIN, BARNEY CHALLIS HAD BEEN DENIED THE ACTION HE CRAVED. IN THAT GREAT INVASION ARMADA WHICH SET OUT TO MEET A TREMENDOUS DAWN, HE WAS TO BE A SPECTATOR ON THE SIDELINES.



AS DAWN BROKE A SCATTERED HANDFUL OF FLAT-BOTTOMED BOATS PRECEDED THE INVASION FLEET INTO THE BEACHES. THEY WERE THE L.C.O.C.U.'S— THE LANDING CRAFT OBSTRUCTION CLEARANCE UNIT. BARNEY'S WAS AMONGST THEM.



THE HOSTILE BEACH, A THOUSAND YARDS AWAY, WAS OMINOUSLY SILENT. QUIETLY AND WITHOUT FUSS, THE FROGMEN SLIPPED INTO THE GREY WATERS TO BEGIN THEIR LONELY AND PERILOUS TASK.



BUT HIGH UP ON THOSE TREACHEROUS SAND DUNES ACROSS THE WATER, VICIOUS EYES WATCHED THE DISTANT BRITISH LANDING CRAFT WITH BELLIGERENT MALICE. SUDDENLY....



THE GERMAN CORPORAL SWUNG HIS HEAVY MACHINE GUN IN A SHALLOW ARC TOWARDS THE SUDDEN MOVEMENT IN THE WATER. A HAIL OF LEAD SPAT INTO THE SEA, LASHING THE SURFACE TO AN UGLY FOAM.



ONE FROGMAN, CAUGHT JUST BELOW THE SURFACE, WAS MORTALLY STRICKEN BY THAT FIRST VENOMOUS BURST OF FIRE. HUNGRILY, THE MACHINE GUN TRAVERSED THE BAY AGAIN. ON THE LANDING CRAFT...

THE JERRIES HAVE
OPENED FIRE ON THEM,
SIR!

YES, SAM! AND IF THEY STOP
OUR BOYS FROM CLEARING THE
OBSTRUCTIONS, THE INVASION TROOPS
ARE GOING TO STOP A PACKET ON
THIS BEACH! THERE'S NOTHING
WE CAN DO... OR
IS THERE?



SWIFTLY, WITH A STRANGE LIGHT IN HIS USUALLY CALM EYES, BARNEY CHALLIS OUTLINED HIS PLAN TO HIS ASSISTANT. SAM MERRIMAN DID NOT HESITATE. . .

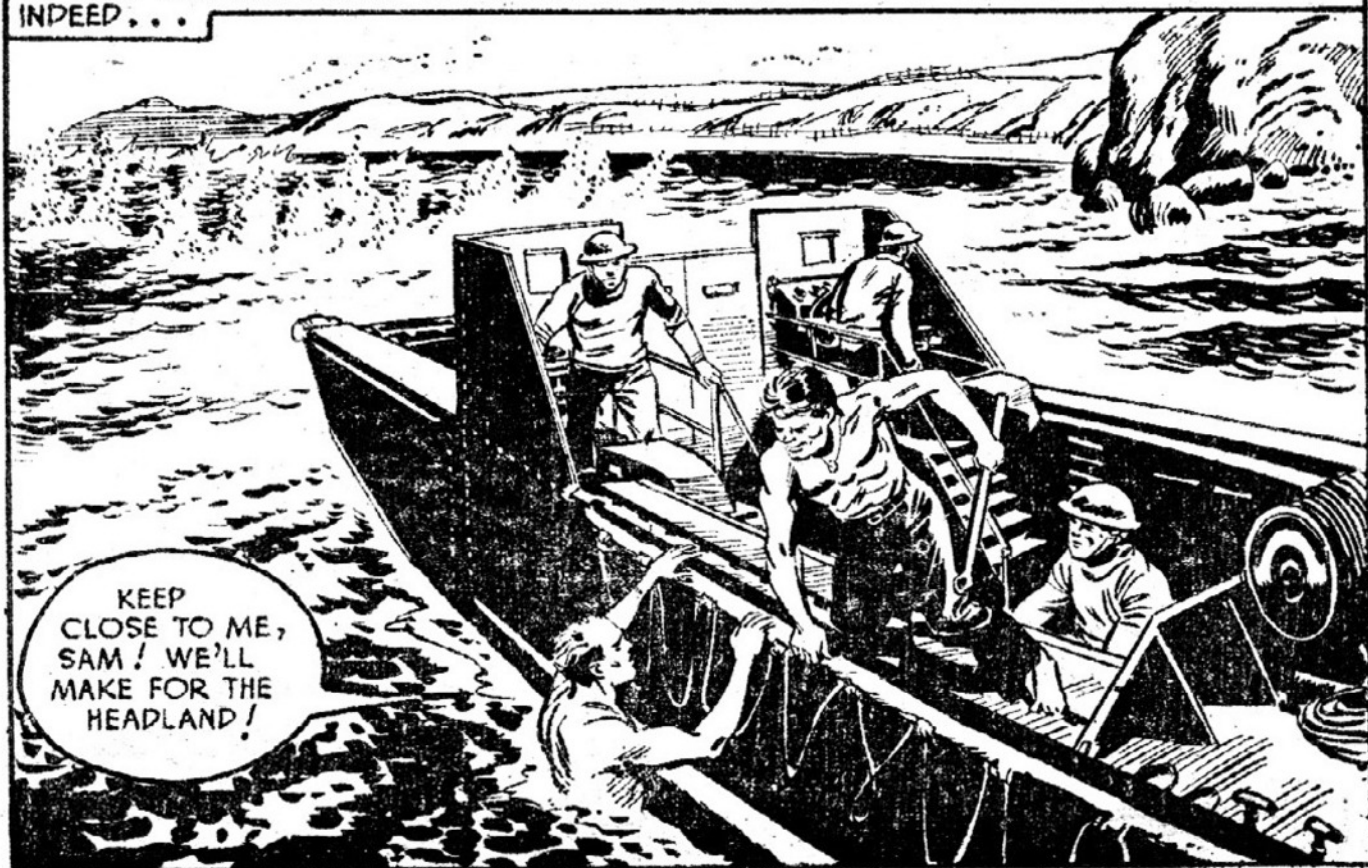
ARE
YOU GAME,
SAM?

AM I GAME, SIR? I'VE BEEN
WAITING ALL THIS WHOLE BLINKING
WAR FOR SOMEBODY TO ORDER
ME TO START BASHING!



BARNEY AND SAM STRIPPED QUICKLY. IN THEIR MOVEMENTS NOW WAS THE ELASTIC SPRING OF MEN WHO ARE POISED FOR DESPERATE ACTION. AND THIS ACTION WAS DESPERATE INDEED. . .

KEEP
CLOSE TO ME,
SAM! WE'LL
MAKE FOR THE
HEADLAND!



—Three—Two—One—ZERO!

AS THE TWO MEN DROPPED INTO THE COLD WATERS OF THE BAY, A THIRD MAN PAUSED IN HIS DANGEROUS TASK AND LISTENED TO THE MUFFLED TATTOO OF THE BULLETS ONLY TEN FEET ABOVE HIS HEAD. . .



CHRIS ARMSTRONG KNEW GRIMLY THAT SOONER OR LATER HE WOULD HAVE TO SURFACE IN THE FACE OF THAT WITHERING FIRE FROM THE MACHINE GUN ON THE BEACH. HE COULD NOT KNOW THAT A COUNTER ATTACK WAS UNDER WAY.



BY ALL NORMAL ODDS, IT WAS A PITIFULLY INADEQUATE COUNTER ATTACK. TWO MEN, ARMED WITH A REVOLVER AND AN IRON SPIKE, AGAINST A GERMAN MACHINE GUN AND ITS CREW. BUT THESE TWO MEN, WERE BURNING WITH A LONG-FRUSTRATED URGE TO FIGHT!



THE MACHINE GUN CREW SPRAYED THE SEA MERCILESSLY AT ANY SIGN OF THE HIDDEN FROGMEN. NOW THEY WERE JOINED BY A SECOND MACHINE GUN ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BEACH. BUT EVEN AS THEY GRINNED TRIUMPHANTLY . . .

ANOTHER
ONE SURFACES!
GET HIM, YOU
FOOL!



AS HE LEAPT TO HIS FEET, A PENT-UP FURY FLUNG BARNEY CHALLIS ACROSS TEN YARDS TO HIS WHEELING FOE. THIS WAS THE FURIOUS MOMENT HE HAD WAITED FOR SO LONG.

AACH!

YIPPEE!



THE SHEER VENOM OF THAT TWO-MAN ATTACK OVERWHELMED THE GERMANS. AS THE ENEMY OFFICER WENT DOWN UNDER HIS CLUBBING GUN BUTT, BARNEY TURNED TO MEET A FRESH ATTACK AND SHOUTED AN ORDER TO THE EXULTANT SAM.

TURN THE MACHINE GUN ON THE OTHER GUN PIT, SAM!

AYE
AYE, SIR!



BARNEY'S AIM WAS LETHAL. THE TWO GERMANS CRUMPLED AND FELL A YARD FROM THE PIT. ALREADY THE MACHINE GUN HAD STARTED ITS CHATTER OF DEATH— BUT THIS TIME IN A NEW DIRECTION...

**DONNERWETTER!
WE ARE ATTACKED!
THE BRITISH HAVE
LANDED!**



THE SECOND MACHINE GUN WAS BLUDGEONED INTO SILENCE BY THAT DEADLY CROSS FIRE FROM THE CAPTURED GUN. AND AS THE GERMAN PATROL IN SUPPORT TURNED FRANTICALLY AND RAN, FROM THE GREEN DEPTHS OF THE SEA...



THE INVASION FLEET HAD ARRIVED TO A SEA-BED REAPED OF ITS DEADLY HARVEST BY THE INTREPID NAVAL FROGMEN, AND A STRONGLY-HELD BEACH CLEARED OF THE ENEMY BY A BALDING NAVAL OFFICER AND HIS ASSISTANT.



BARNEY CHALLIS HAD LONGED TO FIGHT, BUT AS THE BEACH FELL SILENT AND THE BRIEF FIRE IN HIS BLOOD DIED DOWN, AN ODD FEELING CAME OVER HIM. HE WAS FIGHTING, YES... BUT HE WAS BORED...



RESTLESSLY, BARNEY WATCHED THE BRITISH TROOPS POURING ASHORE. RESTLESSLY HIS EYES SCANNED THE BEACH... AND BRIGHTENED WITH AN OLD FAMILIAR QUICKENING OF INTEREST. HE GOT TO HIS FEET...



BARNEY CHALLIS, AFTER ALL, WAS AN ENGINEER.

SO BARNEY GOT THE ACTION HE WANTED AFTER ALL, SAM? BUT WHAT'S HE DOING NOW?

TEN MINUTES OF FIGHTING, SIR, AND HE SAYS HE'S BORED! SO HE FINDS HIMSELF ANOTHER TOY THAT MIGHT BLOW HIM TO SMITHEREENS ANY MOMENT, SIR, AND THERE HE IS AS HAPPY AS A SANDBOY!



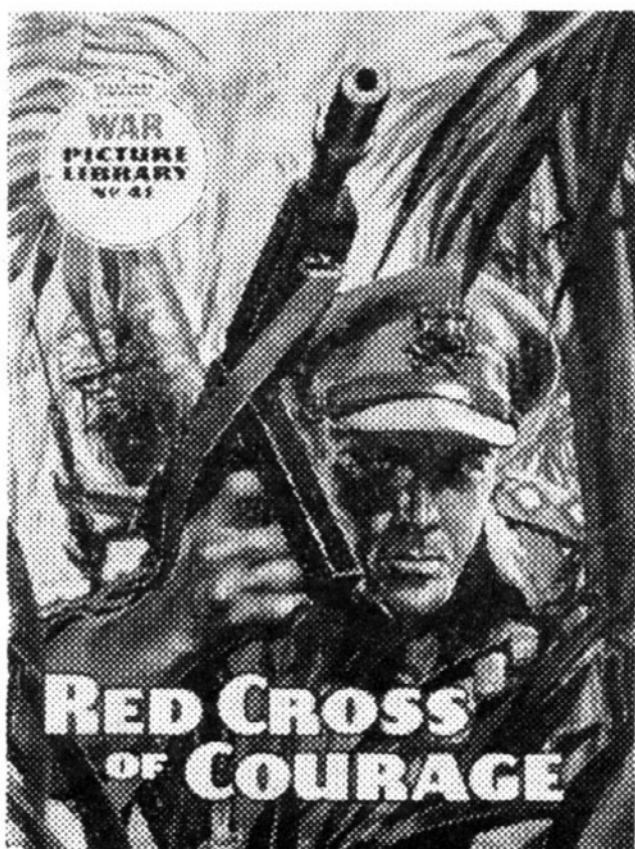
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7/3/60

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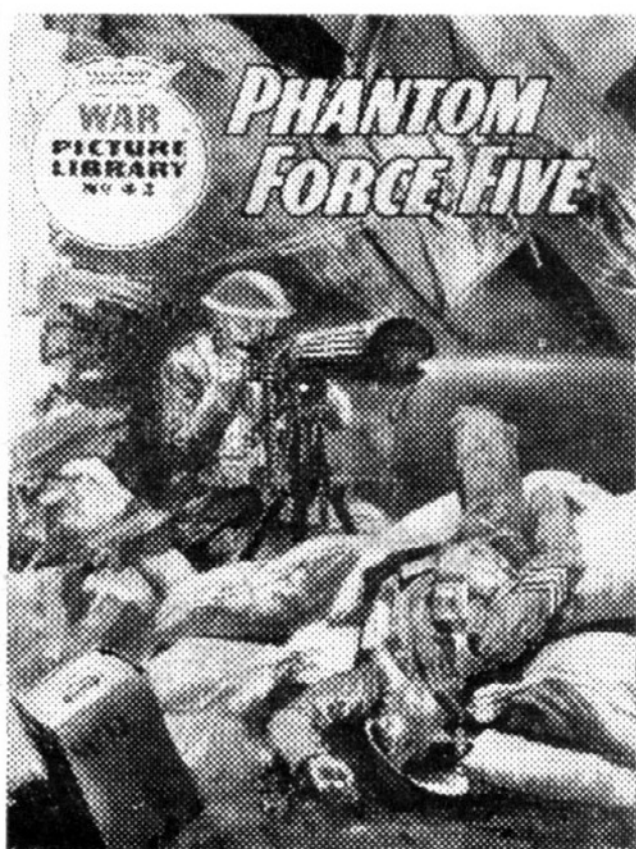
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